

TIP TOP WEEKLY

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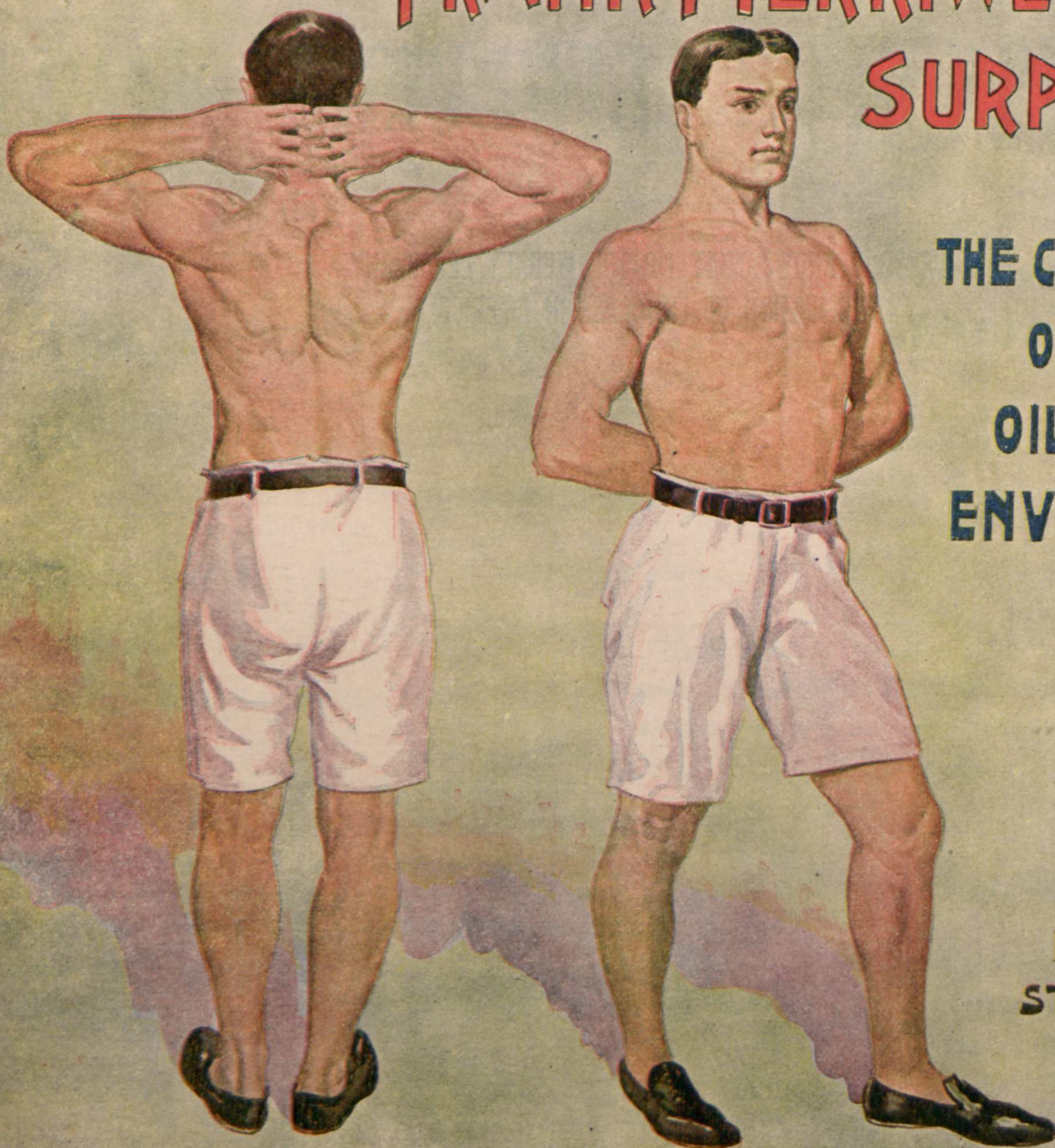
No. 274.

Price, Five Cents.

FRANK MERRIWELL'S SURPRISE

OR

THE CONTENTS
OF THE
OIL SKIN
ENVELOPE



BY
BURT L.
STANDISH

THE WONDERFUL DEVELOPING OF FRANK'S BEST FRIEND, BART HODGE.

EVERYONE KNOWS THAT TIP TOP WEEKLY LEADS ANY
PUBLICATION OF ITS CLASS IN AMERICA.



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NEW YORK, July 13, 1901.

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FRANK MERRIWELL'S SURPRISE;

OR,

The Secret of the Oil-Skin Envelope.

By BURT L. STANDISH.

CHAPTER I.

OPENING THE ENVELOPES.

"The time has come!"

The words came from the lips of Frank Merriwell, who was standing beside a small table in a room of one of New York's big hotels. In his hand he held two singular-looking oilskin envelopes, which were almost exactly alike in every respect. Across each envelope had been written:

"To Frank Merriwell; to be opened the day after he graduates from Yale."

The writing seemed to be that of an aged man, whose hand was weak and unsteady.

Frank Merriwell had studied the writing on those envelopes, and he was convinced that the words on one had been imitated and copied from the other.

Bart Hodge was Merry's companion, sitting near and showing no small amount of interest in the singular envelopes.

"Which contains the message?" was the question that came from Bart's lips.

"That is a conundrum," admitted Frank, as he gazed from one to the other. "You know how the original message was brought to me in my room at college by the man hired for the purpose, and how it was snatched from my hand by Roland Packard.

who got away with it while we were holding up and accusing his twin brother."

"I know all about that," nodded Bart. "And I also know that Oliver Packard swore he would return the message to you."

"This is the one he returned that very night, while the old grads were celebrating on Osborne corner," said Merry, indicating one of the envelopes.

"Which one is that, the original or the fake?"

"The original."

"Then what do you make of it?"

"I believe it does not contain the message."

"I have thought the matter over and arrived at a conviction."

"What conviction?"

"That this, the original envelope, was opened in a most skillful manner by Roland Packard."

"Ah! You believe he opened it and removed the message?"

"Exactly."

"Why did he do that?"

"I don't know, unless he expected he would have to give up something and was determined to hang onto the real message."

"But his brother had a terrible fight with him before he secured the fake. At least, he said so."

"And I believe he told nothing but the truth."

"Why did Roland fight to retain the fake?"

"Perhaps the fight he put up was a bluff, though I have my doubts about it. I am convinced that there was somebody behind Roland Packard. He was not working on his own hook."

"Somebody behind him?"

"Yes. The messenger was pursued all the way from Colorado to New Haven by a man who seemed determined to do him injury. That man failed, but is it not possible he instigated the action of Roland Packard?"

"It may be that he did, but he must have found out very soon after striking New Haven that Packard was your enemy."

Frank nodded.

"Packard was the only real enemy I had left in

college," he said. "But he was a drinking fellow, and he did not hesitate to speak out, so it might be easy for a stranger to pick him up for just what he was."

"And you think the stranger employed him to get hold of the message?"

"I have arrived at that belief."

"Still that does not explain the fake envelope."

"It seems to me that Roland Packard's curiosity was aroused and he determined to find out what the original envelope contained. He opened it."

"But the seal—he could not open it without breaking the seal."

"And the seal could easily be restored, as it was made from a ring bearing the symbol of the old Delta Kappa freshman society, which was abolished long ago. I gave the ring to my father. Other rings exactly like it may be obtained in New Haven."

"Then you think Packard broke the seal and afterwards restored it by means of a ring like the one your father possesses?"

"I think so. In fact, having studied and examined this envelope closely, I think I can detect indications that it has been broken open."

"Then it is likely that Oliver Packard did not restore to you the message, after all."

"Not in this first envelope, but you know he brought me this other, which was taken from the body of his dead brother, who, during an attack of *delirium tremens*, threw himself into Mill River and was drowned."

"Then it is possible that the second envelope is the one that contains the message."

"Yes," nodded Frank. "I almost dread to open it, although the time to do so has come. Something seems to whisper that it contains a great surprise for me."

Hodge looked at Merry in wonder, for it was not often that Frank hesitated or confessed dread.

"When he had this second envelope in his possession," said Frank, "Roland Packard met me and

taunted me. He told me that he would send me forth from Yale a pauper."

"That he would do it?"

"Yes. He must have thought he could do so because he held the message in his possession. He had read the message."

"Well, his lips are silenced; he'll never tell what he read. He was your last open enemy at college, Merriwell, and he got his just deserts. It is amazing to me that a man who had as many foes as you did should come to the end of his college term with only one of them all left to hate him. No other man could have done it."

Merriwell smiled in a satisfied manner.

"I regard your words as extremely complimentary, Hodge," he said. "It is not every man who can turn his enemies into his friends."

"That's right," nodded Bart. "I think you are the only enemy who ever became my friend."

"And I was not really your enemy, only as you made me such. But why do I hesitate to open these envelopes? I might have done so some hours ago, yet I have not. But now——"

Frank sat down beside the table, and, with a firm hand, tore open the envelope he regarded as the original. An exclamation escaped his lips as he drew forth the contents.

"Look, Bart!" he cried. "I was right! Nothing but blank paper!"

He held the unsoiled sheets up before the eyes of his almost breathless companion.

"By Jove! you were right!" said Hodge. "You have a way of figuring things out correctly, Merriwell. The other envelope must contain the message."

But, strange to say, Merriwell seemed to hesitate again.

"What if it should not!" he muttered. "What if that also contains nothing but blank paper!"

"But it must contain the message!" exclaimed Bart.

"Why?"

"Because—because the message was not in this one."

"A poor reason, Bart. It's likely this envelope was fixed to deceive the man who employed Roland Packard to secure the message. I presume that man offered Packard money to get the message and turn it over to him. Packard's curiosity was aroused, and he decided to find out what the message contained, which led him to remove it from the envelope. Then he fixed up the original envelope to deceive the man who had paid him to do the crooked work, but his brother took it from him in the fight. Following that it is likely that he fixed up this other envelope for the purpose of fooling his rascally employer. In such a case, it is almost certain that envelope No. 2 contains blank paper, the same as the first."

"Open it!" panted Hodge.

"That will settle it," said Frank, as he did so.

Bart was rigid as a marble image as Merry drew the contents of the envelope forth.

From Frank's lips came a sigh of satisfaction.

"It is the message!" he said.

"Thank God!" said Hodge, sinking back on his chair.

CHAPTER II.

THE LOSS OF THE MESSAGE.

Had he not been so preoccupied, so absorbed, Frank Merriwell would have heard the slight rustling sound in the alcove bedroom behind him. In times of expected danger his alertness was something remarkable, but just now his mind was concentrated on the mysterious message which he had taken from the envelope.

Nor did Bart hear anything to arouse his suspicions.

A slight breeze came through the open bedroom window, and gently stirred the portieres behind Frank's back.

Merriwell's face grew very pale as he read the opening words of the message, and his watching

companion knew something had produced a profound effect on him.

"What is it?" Bart was compelled to ask.

"It is from my father, as I believed," said Merriwell, plainly making an effort to steady his voice. "I have read nothing but the opening sentence, but this is what it says: 'This, my son, is the confession of your father, who, near to the point of death and beyond all hope of recovery, is lying in the cabin of Juan Delores, near Urmiston, which is about fifty miles from Denver.'"

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Hodge. "Your father dying?"

"Dead by this time, it is likely," came sadly from Frank's lips. "And I not near in his last moments!"

The expression of regret and grief on Frank's face was sincere and profound.

"Too bad!" muttered Bart. "But he always was such a strange man!"

"Strange, indeed," nodded Frank. "I knew little of his life after he went to seek his fortune amid the mines, save that part which is closely connected with his fight against his great enemy, Santenel. He told me that portion of it, but concerning the rest he has said little or nothing."

"This may throw light upon it. He calls it a confession."

"And the fact that he has called it that makes me hesitate once more about reading. But it must be done. What revelation is this I hold in my hands?"

Again Merry lifted the message to read.

Over his shoulder darted a hand that snatched the message from his grasp!

At the same moment, uttering a cry of warning, Bart Hodge sprang to his feet, pointing toward the parted portieres behind Merriwell.

Merry shot to his feet like a flash, but he was barely in time to see a man disappearing between the portieres.

A second time had the precious message been snatched from his fingers.

"Stop him!" shouted Hodge.

Merry was first to leap between the portieres, and

yet he was barely in time to see a man disappearing through a window that led out upon a fire-escape.

A single glimpse of the man's face Merriwell obtained.

Frank did not hesitate. After the man he plunged.

As he leaped out through the window, he saw the man entering the open window of an adjoining room, the fire-escape running from one window to the other.

At a single bound Frank reached the other window and followed the man into the room.

The fugitive was passing out through a door that led into the hall as Merry jumped in by the window.

Toward that door bounded Merry.

Bang!—the door was slammed in his face.

It had a spring lock, and for a moment it bothered Frank, who was compelled to pause to open it. By that time Hodge had reached the window of the room, into which he looked in great surprise, seeing that Merry was there alone.

"Where is the——" Frank heard no more of Bart's question, for he tore open the door and leaped out into the corridor.

The fugitive had disappeared.

Frank went dashing along the passage, looking for the man, but seeing nothing of him. The fellow had disappeared in a most remarkable manner after leaving that room.

"Search, Hodge!" called Merry, and Bart joined in the hunt.

But, though they searched everywhere, they found nothing of the man they were after.

Of course, the hotel was aroused. The clerk in the office was notified, and he sent the hotel detective to join in the search.

But, after an hour of hunting, the searchers were forced to give up, as the unknown thief had not been found.

Then Merry went to the office and took a look at the register to find out who had occupied the room next to his—the one through which the desperate

rascal had made good his retreat from the fire-escape.

The name on the register was, "Anton Mescal, Fair Play, Col."

"Fair Play!" muttered Hodge, who was looking over Frank's shoulder. "What does a scoundrel like that know of fair play!"

Frank asked the clerk if he could give a description of Mescal.

"He is slender, looks like a Spaniard, and has a small, pointed black moustache," was the answer. "I do not remember how he was dressed, so his clothes must have been fairly within the style."

"That's the man!" exclaimed Hodge. "I saw his face, and the description fits."

Frank nodded.

"I believe Mescal is the man," he said. "I will give one thousand dollars for his capture and the restoration to me of the message he snatched from my hands."

The clerk looked at Merry as if doubting his ability to pay such a sum; but the young Yale graduate was taking a small roll of bills from his pocket. From the roll he drew off two five hundred dollar bills, which he handed to the cashier, who stood near the clerk.

"This money is to be paid to the person or persons who capture or cause to be captured the thief who stole the message from me, in case the message is restored to my hands," said Merriwell, quietly. "You are to enlist the services of the regular police and do everything in your power."

"The police have been called already," said the clerk. "I telephoned the nearest station immediately, and two officers appeared very shortly. They have been guarding the entrances to the hotel, while the regular house detectives have been searching. I suspected this Mescal and gave an accurate description of him to the policemen. They have not stopped him as yet."

"Only two officers on guard!" exclaimed Frank. "Yet there is a front and back entrance, and one

through your barber's shop and by the way of the bar. Mr. Mescal is out of the hotel by this time."

"We have done everything we could," declared the clerk, somewhat haughtily.

Frank turned away.

"The message is lost, Bart," he said.

"Lost?" said Bart, astonished that Frank should give up so easily.

"Yes," Merry nodded, his face wearing a grim expression.

Hodge was trembling with rage at the outcome.

"It's an infernal shame!" he hissed. "Merriwell, you must——"

Frank's hand gripped his arm.

"Come!" said Merry's voice, still calm and restrained.

Together they went to the nearest police station, where Frank told his story to the sergeant in charge, repeating his offer for the arrest of the thief and the restoration of the message. He was told that everything possible should be done, and with that promise he was compelled to be satisfied.

Frank scarcely spoke as they returned to the hotel. Bart wiped the perspiration from his face and said things to himself.

In his room Merry sat quite still for some time, the look on his face indicating that he was in deep thought.

Bart did not venture to break in upon his meditations.

To Hodge this second loss of the message, at the moment when Merry had begun to read it, was something to throw him into a perfect tempest of rage; but Frank had shown that he was master of his temper, just as he was master of all his passions.

Bart knew Merry was thoughtfully considering the situation and studying over it in view of the proper course to pursue.

Had it been necessary, Frank could have made up his mind instantly; but, now that there was plenty of time, he was not in such a hurry. However, after half an hour, he quietly said:

"That is what I'll do."

"What is it?" asked Bart, unable to repress his curiosity longer. "What have you decided to do?"

"I believe there is not one chance in a thousand that the man who snatched that message will be captured before he can get out of New York, and this has led me to decide on a course of action. In the single sentence that I read my father said that he was at the cabin of Juan Delores, near Urmiston, which is about fifty miles from Denver."

"You have quoted it accurately."

"I shall wait here until to-morrow. If the police have not made a capture by that time, I shall leave New York."

"Whither bound?"

"For the cabin of Juan Delores, near Urmiston, Colorado. I am going to find out the truth, if possible. There is a mystery to be solved, and I mean to solve it. Bart!"

"Frank!"

"Are you with me?"

Merry had risen. Hodge leaped to his feet. Their hands met, as Bart exclaimed:

"To the end, through thick and thin!"

CHAPTER III.

THE OLD INDIAN.

Before them lay the mighty Rockies, rising range on range, till their glittering, snow-capped summits pressed the sky. Wild and picturesque and awe-inspiring was the scene. They were in the foothills, and the country was rough and broken.

Frank had drawn rein at the mouth of what seemed to be a small valley. He was covered with dust, and the hardy mustang he bestrode showed signs of weariness.

Merriwell was clothed to rough it, having exchanged the garments of the cities and towns for those more suited to the latter stages of his search for the cabin of Juan Delores. On his head was a wide-brimmed felt hat, he wore a woolen shirt, with a side collar and a flowing tie, no vest, a cartridge belt about his waist, and leather leggings covered

his trousers nearly to his thighs. There were spurs on the heels of his boots. His coat he had stripped off, for the day was warm to an uncomfortable degree.

A Winchester repeating rifle was slung at the pommel of Merry's saddle, and a pair of long-barreled revolvers rested in the holsters on his hips. Taken altogether, he looked like a young man who had made preparations for almost anything he might encounter.

Bart Hodge, similarly mounted and dressed, had drawn up beside Frank.

Despite their attire, there was something in the appearance of the two young men that marked them as belonging to "the tenderfoot breed." In other words, the experienced eye would have discovered at a glance that they were Easterners.

A cool breeze came down the valley, bearing with it a pleasant odor of wild growing things.

The faces of both lads, lately fresh from college, had been burned and blistered by the hot suns and searing winds. Still they were handsome fellows, and Merry sat his horse as if born to the saddle.

There was a look of annoyance and perplexity on Frank's face.

"It's remarkable," he said, "that the people at Urmiston know Delores, know he lives somewhere in this vicinity, yet not one of them could give us accurate directions to reach his cabin."

"Hanged remarkable!" growled Bart. "This is the third day we have spent in hunting for his old place, and we've not even found a clew to it."

Merry nodded, frowning beneath the wide brim of his hat.

"We may have passed and repassed it," he said. "There are plenty of places where cabins could be hidden in these valleys."

"That's right. What are we to do?"

"Keep on hunting."

"It's rather tiresome."

"I shall stick to it till I find the cabin of Delores, if it takes a year!" exclaimed Frank, grimly.

Bart knew he would do exactly as he said.

"Perhaps we may be disappointed when we do find it."

"At least, I should be able to learn if my father is dead and where he is buried."

"But the message——"

"I have hopes that I may learn the secret of that also. It may be that he did not trust it alone to that one document."

"It's getting late. What are we to do now? Shall we explore this valley to-night, or wait till morning?"

But little of the valley could be seen through the narrow pass, and that little seemed to promise that it led onward far into the hills.

After a moment, Frank answered:

"We'll ride forward and see if we can get a look into it."

He started onward, and Bart followed, but they had proceeded only a short distance when they were startled to see, sitting on a boulder at one side of the pass, a strange figure. At first it was hard to make out whether it was man or woman, but, as they drew nearer, it straightened up and revealed, peering from the folds of a dirty red blanket, the wrinkled and gnarled face of an old Indian. A pair of beady black eyes were steadily regarding the two young men.

"Watch him, Merry," cautioned Bart, in a low tone. "These half-civilized red dogs are treacherous."

The Indian did not stir as they approached. Beside him, leaning against the boulder, was a handsome rifle. He did not touch the weapon.

"Hello, chief," said Frank, addressing the old man in a manner he knew was flattering to some redskins, as he drew up.

"How, how," grunted the old fellow, in answer.

"Are you acquainted in this vicinity?"

"Ak-waint?" said the old man. "No savvy."

"Are you familiar with the country?"

"Fam-mil? What him?"

"Have you been all round every place here?"

asked Merry, with a sweep of his arm, using the simplest words he could command.

"Heap been all over," was the assurance.

"Know Juan Delores?"

"Him don't live round here."

The answer was prompt enough—a trifle too prompt, Frank fancied.

"Doesn't?" said Merry. "Where does he live?"

"Heap long way off there," and the redskin pointed to the north.

"Are you sure?"

"Heap sure."

"How far? How many miles?"

"Two time ten."

"Twenty?"

The old fellow grunted an affirmative.

"Do you know the way to his place?"

Another affirmative grunt.

"Can you guide us there?"

"No time."

"We will pay you well."

"No time."

"I will give you fifty dollars to guide us to the cabin of Juan Delores."

"No time."

"A hundred dollars."

"No time."

"Confound him!" growled Hodge, angrily. "Money is no object to him. It's likely he doesn't know the value of money. Now, if you had a quart of whisky to offer him, Merriwell, you might get him to do the job."

"I will give you a new blanket and a rifle," promised Merry.

"Got blanket an' rifle," said the old Indian.

"I will give you a good horse."

"Got heap good horse."

"What haven't you got that you want?"

"No want nothin'."

"Will you tell us how to get to the cabin of Delores?"

"Go there two time ten mile, find stream, go up

him to spring, take trail from spring; it make you come to where Juan he live."

Merriwell was not at all satisfied with these directions. There was something in the manner of the old redskin that seemed to arouse his suspicions and make him feel that he was being deceived.

Of a sudden Frank asked:

"Who lives in this valley?"

The old man shook his head.

"No know," he said. "Wolf, bear, mebbe."

"That's not what I mean. Is there a white man who lives in this valley?"

Again a shake of the head.

"Wolf, bear, that all. No; big mount'n lion—him there. Him kill hunter—one, two, t'ree, four hunter—what come for him. Him vely bad lion—heap bad."

Frank was watching the man closely.

"That's just what I'm looking for!" he exclaimed, as if delighted. "I want to shoot a mountain lion."

"You no can shoot him. Big hunter try—no do it. Him kill you heap quick, you go in there."

"He is trying to frighten us so we'll not go into the valley," thought Frank. Aloud he said:

"That's all right; I'll take chances. I reckon the two of us will be too much for Mr. Lion."

"White boy much foolish," declared the old redskin, grimly. "Make big supper for lion. Lion him like white man for supper."

"And I'll have the pelt of that lion just as sure as I live," said Merry, as if in sudden determination. "Come on, Bart."

The old Indian rose quickly as they were about to start forward.

"Stop!" he cried. "Ole Joe Crowfoot him tell you truth. If you go in there you never come back some more. Ole Joe Crowfoot him good Injun—him like white man heap much. No want to see um hurt. Tell um to stay back."

The old savage seemed deeply in earnest now, but that earnestness was something that added to Frank's suspicions and made him all the more determined to go on.

"That's all right," said Merry, with a grim smile. "It's kind of you to take so much interest in us, but we're going after your heap bad lion, and we'll have his pelt."

"Night come soon," said the Indian, with a motion toward the range on range of mountains rising to the westward. "Then lion him crouch and spring. Him git you quick."

"We'll see. If you wait round here long enough we'll show you the pelt of your bad lion when we come back."

"No come back," declared Old Joe Crowfoot, solemnly. "No see you some more. Bye-by."

An expression of deep sadness and regret was on his wrinkled old face as he uttered the words.

Merry laughed lightly, and they rode past him and headed onward into the valley.

"He was very anxious to stop us," said Hodge.

"That's right," nodded Frank. "He was altogether too anxious. As soon as I tumbled to that I decided to take a look into the valley. Do you know, we stumbled on the entrance to this valley by accident. I fancy we might search a week for it, if we were to go away now, without finding it."

"I was thinking of that," said Bart. "It might puzzle us to find it again. Perhaps that old duffer was counting on that. Those red dogs are treacherous, and——"

They heard a sharp cry behind them. Whirling in the saddle, Frank saw the old Indian standing with the butt of his rifle pressed against his shoulder.

The muzzle of the rifle was turned directly toward Frank, and plainly the redskin was on the point of pressing the trigger.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE VALLEY.

Frank knew he was in deadly peril, and he would have attempted to fling himself from the saddle but for something else he saw.

On a mass of jagged rocks behind the Indian and

about twenty feet above his head had appeared a boy.

Not over thirteen years of age was the lad, whose curly, dark hair fell upon his shoulders. He was dressed in fanciful garments, like those worn by a young Mexican lad, and the bright colors of his clothes made him a picturesque figure.

Plainly it was from his lips that the cry had issued.

In his hand the boy held a stone as large as a man's fist, and even as Merry turned he hurled the stone.

Straight through the air whizzed the missile, striking the barrel of the old Indian's rifle.

Smoke belched from the muzzle of the weapon and the crags flung back the sound of the report, but the bullet flew wild.

Frank Merriwell's life had been saved by the stone thrown by the strange boy.

With an exclamation of rage, Hodge snatched up his rifle and reined his mount round to take a shot at the redskin, who had wheeled instantly and was clambering up the rocks toward the boy, as if bent on murder.

"Soak him, Merry!" panted Bart.

Frank's first impulse was to shoot, but he quickly saw that he was in no further danger just then, and he had no desire to shed human blood unless compelled to do so.

Bart's rifle rose, but Merry thrust the muzzle aside just as the weapon spoke, and the bullet flattened on the rocks.

"Why did you do that?" palpitated Hodge, in amazement and anger. "Can't you see! That red devil is going to murder the kid!"

It did seem that the Indian meant the boy harm, and Merry shouted:

"If you put a hand on that boy I'll bore you!"

At the same time he held his own rifle ready for instant use.

Old Joe Crowfoot seemed either not to hear or to be too enraged to heed. Like a mountain goat, he

raced upward over the rocks and hastened straight toward the boy.

But, what was strangest of all, the boy made no effort to escape, nor did he seem at all frightened. Instead, he seemed to stand and await the approach of the Indian.

Frank and Bart were surprised by this, but they were still more surprised by what followed.

The Indian reached the boy and quickly clutched him. Then, with a swift swing, the strange old redskin swept the lad round behind him and up to his back. The arms of the boy immediately clasped about the Indian's neck, while his legs twined round the old fellow's body, and there he hung pick-a-pack fashion.

Scarcely had Old Joe Crowfoot paused in his upward race. When Frank and Bart had confronted him at the mouth of the valley both had fancied him old and rather feeble, but now he seemed to have the strength of a youth and the agility of a mountain goat. Having swung the boy to his back, he continued to clamber upward over the rocks as if quite unimpeded by his burden.

"Well," gasped Hodge, "if that doesn't beat the Old Boy himself!"

Merry was no less amazed. To both it had seemed that the old Indian meditated doing the boy harm as he clambered toward him, but the youngster had betrayed no fear, although his hand flung the missile that destroyed Old Joe's aim and saved Frank Merriwell's life.

"He's running off with the boy!" palpitated Bart.

"And the boy is perfectly willing," said Merry.

"But the kid threw that stone at the old duffer."

"For which I am very thankful, as it is certain the old duffer meant to perforate me."

Then they sat there on their horses and watched till the old Indian and his remarkable burden disappeared amid the rocks. Just before vanishing from view, Old Joe Crowfoot paused, turned and looked down on the boys. Then he made a gesture that seemed to be one of warning. The boy, still cling-

ing to the back of his peculiar companion, took off his wide hat and waved it gayly.

A moment later they were gone.

Frank and Bart sat there, staring upward and remaining silent for some moments. At last Merriwell said:

"Well, that little affair is over. Let's move along and see what will happen next."

"I don't understand it," muttered Hodge, in disappointed perplexity.

"Nor do I," confessed Frank, cheerfully.

"It's strange."

"Mighty strange."

"A white boy and an Indian."

"Companions beyond a doubt."

"Yet the boy threw a stone at the Indian."

"I believe he threw the stone to hit the Indian's rifle, a feat he accomplished. I do not think he intended to hit the Indian. Anyhow, I owe him my life, and I am grateful."

For a few minutes longer they remained there, discussing what had happened, and then Merry again led the way into the valley. As they advanced it slowly broadened before them until at last they reached a point where they beheld a view that was pleasant to the eye.

The valley was eight or ten miles in length, and a stream ran through it, disappearing into a narrow gorge. Near the head of the valley was a pretty little lake, with timber about it. In the valley were to be seen a few grazing cattle, yet from their position the boys could see no ranch house.

"But I'm certain somebody lives here," said Frank. "The sight of the cattle convinces me of that."

They soon found that it was no easy matter to ride down into the valley from that point, but they discovered a dimly-defined trail, which they ventured to follow.

Fortunately the hardy little mustangs were steady and sure of foot, for there were points where it seemed that no horse could go down without falling.

The little beasts squatted on their haunches more than once and literally slid along till they could recover themselves.

Bart had his teeth set, and no word came from his lips, as he was ready and determined to follow wherever Merriwell led.

No accident happened, and the level of the valley was reached. Then they headed toward the lake at the upper end.

The sun was dropping behind the western peaks when they entered a strip of timber that lay across their path in the vicinity of the lake.

The cattle they had passed gave them little notice, convincing them that they were accustomed to the presence and sight of mounted riders.

The timber was open, yet they were unable to ride through it at a swift pace, as they had not entered on a regular trail. When they had proceeded a considerable distance they came at last upon a path. In the deepening gloom it was not easy to make out if it was a horse trail or footpath.

As they reached this path, Frank suddenly pulled up, uttering a soft word of warning.

"Stop, Hodge!" he said. "I thought I heard something."

Bart stopped promptly, and they sat there, motionless and listening.

At first they heard no sound save the breathing of their mounts. Bart was about to speak, when Merry lifted his hand.

Straining their ears, they distinctly made out the sound of swift footsteps, which were approaching.

Hodge gripped the butt of a revolver and drew it from its holster.

A moment later the silence of the gloomy timber was broken by a sound that sent the blood leaping to their hearts.

"Help! Oh, oh—help!"

It was the cry of a child in great fear and distress.

CHAPTER V.

THE STRUGGLE IN THE TIMBER.

"Choke off the kid, Bill! Are you crazy to let her screech like that?"

The command came quick and sharp and suppressed.

"Hanged ef I like this yar business of chokin' babbys! I wouldn't mind ef she wuz a man."

The retort was growled forth in a gruff bass voice.

Two dark forms were seen coming along the path. One of them, the one in advance, carried in his arms a little girl of twelve.

The ruffians did not observe Frank and Bart until they were quite close. Then, of a sudden, as the big fellow in advance halted, uttering a startled oath, Merriwell's clear voice rang out:

"Drop that child, you whelps, or we'll drop you."

The man behind made a quick movement, and Frank flung himself from the saddle.

It was well Merry did so, for the man had whipped out a revolver and fired over the shoulder of his companion, the bullet whistling past Frank's ear as he dropped.

"Got him!" grated the man, evidently believing he had shot the youth. "Down goes the other one!"

Bart had a revolver in his grasp, but, in the gloom of the timber, he had refrained from firing, fearing to injure the girl, who now uttered another cry for help.

But Hodge knew he was in danger, and he feared Frank had been hit by the shot of the ruffian. He ducked beside the neck of his horse and was barely in time to save his life, for another flash of fire punctured the shadows, another report rang through the timber, and the second bullet cut a hole through the hat of the dark-faced youth.

Then Hodge saw Merriwell leaping straight at the ruffian in advance, and he knew Frank was not seriously hurt.

With a shout of relief and satisfaction, Bart sprang to the ground and jumped after Frank.

"Give it to the dogs, Merry!" he exclaimed.

Merriwell was on the big ruffian in a moment. The man had swung the child under his arms, and he brought forth a revolver as Frank came up.

The young athlete ducked and struck out, and the revolver was sent spinning from the grasp of the wretch, being discharged as it flew through the air.

Then Merry was on the scoundrel.

The ruffian was forced to drop the child and meet the attack of the fearless youth.

Hodge went past like a leaping panther, but the other man had darted behind a tree and melted away amid the underbrush in a most surprising manner.

While Bart slashed about in search of the fellow who had disappeared, Merriwell fought the other, who was a gigantic bruiser of remarkable strength.

The child had crept away a short distance, where it crouched on the ground, watching the battle in fascination and fear.

"Dern yer!" growled the ruffian. "Whatever do ye mean by botherin' two peaceable gents in this yar way?"

"We mean business," answered Frank.

"Wal, danged ef I don't cut yer inter ribbons!" declared the giant, as he made a movement and wrenched forth a knife.

Frank moved swiftly, and was barely in time to fasten his fingers on the wrist of the murderous wretch.

"No, you don't!" he exclaimed. "I object to anything of the sort!"

"Object and be dished!" came from the other. "Why, do you think yer kin hold that yar hand? Ye're nothin' but a kid!"

Then the ruffian made a furious, wrenching twist to get his hand free, but, to his surprise, the grip of the beardless youth was like steel, and he failed utterly in his attempt.

This was the fellow's first surprise; others followed swiftly.

"What's this?" he howled, in fury. "Dang my hoofs! kin you hang on that way?"

"You'll find I'm something of a sticker," laughed Frank.

Now, the other did not know that when Frank Merriwell laughed in that peculiar manner he was the most dangerous, and he fancied the youth thought the affair not at all serious.

"I'll git him in a minute," the ruffian mentally decided, "an' I'll give him the length of this yar toad-sticker, which'll convince him that this is a mighty sad world, I reckon."

But though he made another furious attempt to get his hand free, the fingers of the youth were like riveted bands.

Then the ruffian grew still more angry.

"Double dern yer!" he panted. "You kin hang on, so I reckon I'll just have ter break yer back!"

Then he tried to fling Frank to the ground, but Merry used a wrestling trip, and the man went down instead.

In the fall the grip of the youth was almost broken, and, with a snarl of satisfaction, the ruffian twisted his wrist free.

Then he swung back his hand to drive that terrible knife to the hilt between Merry's ribs.

But Frank knew his danger, and, like a flash, he had the thick, hairy wrist again in his clutch.

The man swore and tried to fling his youthful antagonist off, but he found he could not do so and retain his hold on the knife. Then he relinquished the knife and put every effort into the struggle to hurl Merry aside.

The little girl, on her knees by the foot of a great tree, watched this fearful battle with distended eyes.

Bart Hodge was still beating about for the man who had so cleverly vanished in the gloom.

There was a sudden ringing report, as fire belched from a tangled thicket, and a bullet grazed Bart's cheek.

Hodge dropped, knowing now the other man had sought shelter, and waited till he felt that he could bring one of the youths down with a sure shot.

Evidently the man believed he had succeeded, for he rose to his feet, so that Bart obtained a glimpse of him.

In his impatient rage, Hodge did not wait for the

fellow to advance, but he took a quick aim and fired immediately.

Down went the man.

"Soaked him!" said Bart, grimly. "He brought it on himself."

Then he lifted himself to his feet.

It was Bart's turn to meet with surprise, for again from the thicket came a flash of fire, and this time Hodge felt something burn and sting in his shoulder.

With a shout of fury, Hodge leaped straight toward the thicket, into which he fearlessly plunged, reckless of his life.

But when he reached the spot where he believed the enemy must be, he found no one there.

The desperado had slipped away as Hodge came leaping toward the spot, being aided to escape observation by the deepening darkness.

Finding the man was not there, the conviction came on Hodge that he was crouching near, waiting to obtain another shot, which he would take care to make sure.

Then the instinct of self-preservation overcame Bart's great fury, and he crouched close to the ground, holding his revolver ready, while he peered about in the gloom and listened.

Not far away the battle between Frank and the giant ruffian was still raging fiercely.

With every sense on the alert, Bart squatted there, ready to shoot or spring. His nerves were tingling, but he did his best to be steady and cool. An encounter of this sort, however, was something to unsteady the nerves of almost any man, and it was not at all strange that Bart found himself shaking somewhat as he remained motionless and waiting.

The breathing of the floundering giant who was trying to conquer Merriwell, the Yale athlete, sounded hoarsely through the gloom, and there was something awesome in it.

Suddenly the sounds stopped. The struggle seemed to be ended.

Who had conquered?

CHAPTER VI.

THE KIDNAPPED GIRL.

At the risk of betraying his position to the man who might be waiting to shoot at him, Bart ventured to call:

"Merriwell!"

Hodge's heart gave a leap of joy when Frank's voice answered:

"Here! Are you all right?"

"Sure thing! And you?"

"Well, I've succeeded in quieting this chap, though he did put up an awful fight."

"Look out for the other!"

"Then he is——"

"He's around here somewhere. I popped at him two or three times, but I didn't bag him."

Crouching low, Bart moved as quietly as he could toward Frank, still ready to shoot instantly.

But, in the gloom, no pistol flashed, and no deadly bullet sung through the timber.

Bart found Merriwell with his arm about the frightened child, while near by, on the ground, lay the body of the giant, sprawling grotesquely.

"Have you killed him?" asked Hodge, looking down at the silent ruffian.

"I'm afraid so," said Frank.

"Afraid?" exclaimed the dark-faced youth.

"Yes."

"Why afraid?"

"I have no desire to kill anybody."

"But this murderous dog——"

"Not even a human being of his calibre."

"Well," said Hodge, grimly, "I did my level best to bore the other cur, and my conscience would not have troubled me had I succeeded. How did you do this one?"

"He had wonderful strength and wind, and he thrashed round to beat the band. I was forced to be at my best all the time, and I hurled him back repeatedly after he had partly succeeded in rising with me. The last time I did so his head struck against the exposed root of that tree, and it doubled under

him with a snap like a pistol shot. Then he was limp as a rag, and the fight was over, as far as he was concerned."

Bart caught the ruffian by the shoulders and partly lifted him. Then he let the fellow drop back, a slight shiver running over him.

"Neck broken!" he said, shortly.

"Broken!" exclaimed Frank. "As bad as that?"

"Sure thing!" said Hodge. "He won't try to kidnap any more children, for I reckon that was what they were doing with this one."

Frank turned his attention to the child once more, while Bart looked after the tired mustangs.

Under ordinary circumstances the animals might have been frightened into dashing away, but, wearied as they were, they had not gone far.

As Bart approached them, a figure suddenly sprang out of the gloom and onto the back of one of them. There was a yell, and away dashed the animal along the path, bearing the ruffian who had escaped.

Hodge took a shot at the fellow, and then, finding the man still clung to the mustang, having disappeared in the gloom, he fired again in the direction of the sound.

Still the mustang fled on with its burden, and Bart muttered an exclamation of rage.

The other animal had been alarmed by this, and Bart found some trouble in approaching the creature, though he finally succeeded in capturing him.

"Well, Merriwell," he said, as he returned, leading the single mount, "we've lost one of our beasts."

Frank had been trying to allay the fears of the trembling child, and he simply made a gesture for Bart to be quiet, which was seen and understood, for all of the fast-deepening shadows.

"We will not harm you," Merry was saying, in a soft, gentle way. "You need have no further fear. What is your name?"

"Felicia," was the low answer. "But Old Joe calls me Star Eyes."

"Felicia—what a pretty name!" said Frank. "And these bad men were carrying you off?"

"Yes. Please take me home."

"We'll do that, little Felicia. Your home is here, in the valley?"

"Yes, sir. It's in the Black Woods, by Lake Sunshine."

"Lake Sunshine? Another pretty name! What do you call the valley?"

"Pleasant Valley."

"And that is a pretty name, too."

"My mamma named the lake, and the valley, and the woods. But now she's gone."

"Gone?"

"Yes, and papa says she's gone to a beautifuler world than this, though it doesn't seem to me it can be true, and I know just where papa put her in the ground when she died. I was there putting flowers on her grave, and the grave of the Good Stranger, when those bad men grabbed me and carried me away."

Frank felt a queer thrill.

"The Good Stranger?" he said. "Who was that?"

"Oh, I loved him, and Dick loved him, and we all loved him, for he was so kind. But the fever took him, and he died, too. He is buried near my mamma."

"What was his name?"

"I don't know. Old Joe called him White Beard, but I just called him uncle."

"How long ago was it that he died?"

"More than a week now. Papa buried him, too."

Bart's hand fell on the shoulder of Frank, who was kneeling, with one arm about the little girl. That touch told that Hodge was beginning to realize just what Merry's questions were leading to, which filled him with eagerness.

"What is your papa's name?" asked Merry, and then held his breath as he waited for the answer.

"I just call him papa," said the child. "Please take me to him. He will be so sorry when he finds I'm not at home."

"In a moment we'll take you to him. You call him, papa, but what do others call him?"

"Nobody ever comes here much, except Old Joe, and he calls my papa Silent Tongue."

"Who is Old Joe?"

"A good Indian."

Merry started a bit, and then quickly asked:

"Do you mean Old Joe Crowfoot?"

"Papa calls him Crowfoot sometimes. Please take me to my papa."

"The scent grows hot!" muttered Hodge.

"And did you never hear your father called anything but Silent Tongue? What did your mother call him?"

"Most times she called him dearest, but sometimes she called him——"

"Yes, yes—she called him what?"

"Juan."

"I knew it!" broke from Hodge. "We're on the right trail, Merry!"

"At last!" exclaimed Frank, in deep satisfaction. "Little Felicia, we'll take you to your father without delay."

CHAPTER VII.

JUAN DELORES.

They left the big ruffian lying there in the darkness of the timber. Little Felicia was placed on the back of the mustang, beside which Frank walked, while Bart led the way along the path.

Having passed from the dark timber, they came out near the pretty little lake, which was reflecting the golden glory of the lingering sunset, flung up against the mountain-bordered sky. The crimson and amber and purple were fading from the heavens as the sombre wing of night spread over the world.

"There are the Black Woods," said the little girl, as she indicated a thick mass of trees near the head of the valley. "My home is in there."

By the dying light Frank made out that she was very pretty, with dark hair and eyes. She had a sweet voice.

"Felicia," he thought, as they made their way to—

ward the woods. "The name seems to fit her. It seems strange to find such a child here."

Merry was restraining the impatience that beset him, for now he felt that he was near the end of his long search. He had no doubt that the Good Stranger spoken of by the child was his father, who had died there in that wild but beautiful spot—died as he had lived, strangely.

There was a mystery to be unfolded, and Frank was determined to clear it up, if possible.

"Up there," said Felicia, with a gesture, "is the place where my mamma and the Good Stranger are buried."

Frank thrilled. He was near the grave of his father, he believed. It was too late to visit the grave then; besides, Merry felt that it was his duty to take the child home without delay.

Felicia had explained that her father was away at the time when the men came upon her and carried her away, having left some hours before, saying he would return ere nightfall, and warning her to stay close to her cabin home.

As they approached the Black Woods they could discern the dark opening where the trail entered. There the track was plain beneath their feet.

But when they were yet a little distance a stern voice cried from the darkness of the shadows:

"Halt, dere!"

Bart stopped, his hand flying to the butt of his revolver. His rifle, swinging from the saddle of his mustang, had been lost when the escaping ruffian rode madly away on the beast.

"Don't try to draw da gun!" came the voice from the woods. "Shoot mighty quick if you do! Up with da hands!"

"It's papa!" exclaimed little Felicia. "Papa! papa!"

Bart shrugged his shoulders and lifted his hands.

"T'other one put up da hands," came the voice.

"We are friends," declared Frank, quietly. "We have just saved your child from the hands of ruffians."

"Put up da hands!" ordered the voice, and there

was a clicking that seemed to tell of a rifle being cocked. "I shoot if you don't!"

Merry stood up boldly, facing the point from which the voice came, fearlessly saying:

"If you shoot, you will fire on those who have saved your child, which will prove you a dastard. I refuse to be held up road-agent style, and shall not lift my hands. Fire if you will!"

Silence for a moment, and then, quick as thought, the child leaned over and put her arms about Merry's neck, crying:

"Don't papa—don't! He fought for me, and he beat the big, bad man who was carrying me away!"

Another silence, and then the voice called:

"Felicia!"

"Papa!"

"Get off dat horse and come here quick-a!"

She seemed to hesitate, and then she tightened her arms about Frank's neck, murmuring in his ear:

"Don't be afraid. I'll not let my papa hurt you."

A second later she had slipped to the ground and was running toward the dark woods, into which she disappeared.

Frank and Bart stood waiting what was to follow. The sound of murmuring voices came from amid the grim old trees, and the child was heard relating to her father the story of her thrilling and exciting adventures.

But it seemed that the man meditated upon the proper course to pursue, for she was forced to plead with him in behalf of Frank and Bart.

"They are good, papa—I know they are," they heard her declare. "The one who fought so hard for me with the great, big, bad man is just as kind and gentle."

After a time the man came forth from the darkness, leading the child by the hand, while he carried his rifle in his other hand. He seemed to be keenly on the alert, as if he did not trust the strangers, for all of the words of his child.

"I have to t'ank you," he said, with an accent, "for what you have done. My little Felicia, she tell me. She is all I have left now. When I come on my way

home and hear da shooting, my heart it jump like a frog into my mouth-a. I run home quick as I can, and call, call, call for her. She do not answer. Den I t'ink somet'ing have happen to her, and I start to run dis way fast. When I come here to da edge of da woods I see you coming dis way, and I stop. You bring my little Felicia back-a to me, and I t'ank you."

The child seemed to look at her father in surprise, as if she were not accustomed to hearing him speak thus freely.

"We are happy to be of service to you and little Felicia, Mr. Delores," said Merry, quietly.

The man was seen to start a bit, while he gripped his rifle still harder.

"You know my name?" he said, a bit harshly.

"Yes."

"How?"

"We have come far to find you."

This seemed to put him more than ever on his guard.

"What do you want?"

"The story is rather long," said Merry. "There is no chance for us to get out of this valley to-night. Take us to your home and I will tell you everything. I do not think you will regret it."

"Why should I do dat? You are strangers."

"That is true, but you knew Charles Merriwell."

Frank looked straight and hard at the man as he uttered the words, but, to his surprise, the father of little Felicia did not betray emotion of any sort—or the darkness hid his betrayal.

"Charles Merriwell?" he said. "Who you mean?"

"The Good Stranger, who lies buried over yonder."

"What you know 'bout him?"

"He was my father."

Little Felicia gave a cry, but the man simply said:

"How you prove dat?"

"I can prove it. I am Frank Merriwell, well known in New Haven, where I have been at college. This is my friend, Bart Hodge, who will tell you whatever you wish to know about me."

"But I know not'ing of him. Dat be no proof. Have you de word?"

"The word?"

"Dat's what I ask."

Frank was forced to confess that he did not know what Juan Delores meant by "the word."

"Den you be not Frank Merriwell!" positively declared the man.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HOME OF JUAN DELORES.

Frank was surprised that Delores should speak thus, and seem so positive in his conviction.

"I do not know what you mean by 'the word,'" Merry said, "but I assure you that you are wrong about me not being Frank Merriwell."

"He would come with da word."

"Then you have been expecting him?"

"I no say so."

"But you have the same as said so. There has been a failure of the plans, Mr. Delores, and that is why I do not come with the word you expect. I will explain everything to you if you will give me a chance."

"Why should I trust-a you?"

"Your daughter, safe at your side, answers that question."

"Follow me," said Juan Delores, turning about.

Frank had won, and he followed, Bart striding along at his side, saying nothing, but thinking a great deal.

They entered the Black Woods by the dark trail, which it was now difficult to follow, proceeding till they came to a cabin in the very midst of the growth.

No light gleamed from the cabin, but Delores said:

"Dis my home. Felicia, you take da stranger in da house and make da light. I take da horse. I come prit' quick."

Frank surrendered the mustang to the man, and then they followed little Felicia into the cabin, won-

dering why the home had been built in the midst of that gloomy growth of trees.

The child found matches and lighted an oil lamp which stood on a table in the living-room—the room they had entered.

The light showed them a comfortably, even tastily, furnished room, much to their surprise. The room was small, but the walls were tinted blue, the floor carpeted, and the furniture was good. There were handsome paintings on the walls, while at the two windows were lace curtains. A handsome piano sat in one corner of the room, opposite an open fireplace of stone.

Both Bart and Frank were surprised, and they exchanged glances which told each other their feelings.

By the light of the lamp, Merry saw little Felicia was pretty, indeed, with a dark, oval face, curving Cupid lips and snowy white teeth.

"Let me take your hats," she said, smiling at them. "Sit down. Papa will be right in."

They sat down, and Merry, finding a guitar, soon occupied himself. Having tightened the strings and put the instrument in tune, he strummed lightly upon it, singing a soft little song to the girl, who came and stood near, her hands clasped, looking at him earnestly.

While Merry was singing, Juan Delores came to the door and paused a moment. He looked in and beheld the spectacle. It reassured him and banished his fears. When he came in he closed and bolted the door.

"I see you make yorse'f at home," he said. "Good!"

He was a man with a Spanish face and deep, dark eyes. His face was not exactly handsome, and yet about it there was something fascinating. He had a mustache and imperial, which had once been coal-black, but were now heavily mixed with gray.

Delores had studied Merriwell's face as he stood outside the door, and what he saw seemed to restore his confidence. Surely, this frank-appearing youth who was singing to Felicia could not be very bad.

But, when he looked at Bart, Delores was not so

sure, for the face of Hodge was not one so easily read.

Felicia clapped her hands.

"Oh, that's a fine song!" she cried.

"You like music, do you?"

"Oh, yes, I do! I can sing."

"I shall be delighted to hear you sing."

"Mamma taught me," said the little girl, soberly. "She used to sing such sweet songs."

Juan Delores had very little to say, though he lingered a while and listened to their talk. At last he said:

"I see you all right, young gentlemen. I go get da supper. Mebbe you be hungry?"

"Well," smiled Frank, "to confess the truth, I am ravenous."

"And I'm rather empty myself," acknowledged Bart, dryly.

"I have not much fine food," said Delores; "but I t'ink I have somet'ing to fill you on."

"That's what we're looking for, Mr. Delores," said Merry. "You'll not be troubled by our fastidiousness."

"Can I help you, papa?" asked little Felicia.

"No; you stay and make da gentlemen company."

Then, having stood quite still and looked at Merry, the queer man suddenly held out his hand, exclaiming:

"I t'ank you, sir, for save my little girl. I love her. She is all I have left since her mother go 'way forever."

Frank was touched.

"Don't mention it, Delores," he said, as he took the offered hand. "Her cry of distress appealed to me, and I was ready to fight to the death for her."

"I know da men who were carryin' her off," said Felicia's father, his eyes flashing. "Da come here an' make da threat when da no find what da want. I go to look for dem, but I did not t'ink da get dis side of me. I t'ink my Felicia be safe."

Then he stooped and put his arms lovingly about the little girl, whom he kissed with great tenderness.

"You knew the men?" said Merry. "What did they want?"

"Something dey never get," answered Delores. "Da big one be Gunnison Bill, da worst dog in da State!"

"That's the one I had the fight with," nodded Merry.

"With him? Why, he much bigger dan you!"

"Somewhat."

"How you fight him?"

"Hand-to-hand. He pulled a knife on me, but I got him by the wrist and forced him to drop it."

Delores seemed unable to believe this.

"Why, you very young!" he said. "You almost boy. Gunnison Bill, he is giant."

"Mr. Merriwell is an athlete," put in Hodge. "He is the champion all-round athlete of Yale—or was."

"Mr. Merriwell!" said Delores, again looking searchingly at Frank. "Why you call him dat?"

"Because it is his name, even though you, for some unknown reason, seem to think contrary."

Juan Delores shook his head.

"It very queer," he said. "If he be Frank Merriwell, he should bring da word."

"I think I know what you mean by that," said Merry. "'The word' is something my father told you I would be able to give when I appeared. I will explain after supper why I am unable to give the word. I believe I can satisfy you, sir."

"I hope you do dat; but never till you give da word am I to do it."

"Do what?"

"Dat I shall not tell."

"It is plain that you are bound not to betray your trust, Mr. Delores, whatever it is. I admire you because you are faithful."

"An' I admire you because you whip da Gunnison Bill. How you do it, I cannot guess."

"Oh, papa, he did fight so hard, and I was so afraid!" exclaimed Felicia. "Once I thought sure the bad man would kill him right before me, but I prayed to the Lord."

"Did you pray?" breathed Frank, drawing her to

his knee. "Bless you, sweet little Felicia! Perhaps it was your prayer that saved my life!"

"Do you think so?"

"It may be. Who knows?"

"*Quien sabe*," said Juan Delores. "But it was not Gunnison Bill dat be most dangerous. It was da odder. I know him—I know Anton Mescal!"

"Anton Mescal?" shouted Frank, leaping to his feet and clutching the man's arm. "Good Heavens! do you mean to tell me that the man with Gunnison Bill was Anton Mescal?"

"Dat his name. He come here an' try to bluff me two days ago. I laugh at him. He swear he make me laugh some odder way. He try to keep his word."

"Anton Mescal!" repeated Merry, in deep emotion. "And it was too dark for me to recognize the wretch who stole the message from me! Oh, if I had grappled with him, instead of Gunnison Bill!"

"Oh, if I had bored him with a bullet!" grated Hodge, who was even more excited than Merry.

"You know him?" questioned Delores.

"Know him?" said Frank. "I never saw the scoundrel but once in my life, but on that occasion he snatched from my hands the dying message sent me by my father, who, I believe, is buried in this valley."

Delores could not help being impressed by the words and manner of the two young men.

"Dat why Anton Mescal come here an' make him demand," he said. "But he never succeed. Da boy is safe."

CHAPTER IX.

DELORES UNMASKS.

The suspicions of Juan Delores were allayed at last, and he left the boys with Felicia, while he retired to an adjoining room to prepare the supper.

Frank and Bart were given something to talk about.

"Mescal is near," said Merry. "He may have that

message on his person. If fate will only bring us face to face once more!"

"If fate had directed one of my bullets!" exclaimed Hodge. "What do you suppose that message contains?"

"You have asked me a question to which I cannot imagine the answer."

"Your father was very rich."

"Yes."

"And peculiar."

"True."

"Where is his wealth?"

"Heaven knows."

"Where is his will?"

"Give it up."

"That message must have told where to find his wealth and the will he has left."

"Perhaps so. But something tells me that was not all. I am certain the message held something more—a secret of great importance."

"Mescal is a desperate scoundrel. He will not be driven away easily."

"I hope not."

Felicia came and climbed on Frank's knee once more.

"You have had trouble," she said, in her tender, sympathetic way. "Your papa is dead. Was the Good Stranger your papa?"

"I think so, little one," said Frank.

"He was kind to me," said she; "but he loved Dick most."

"Dick—who is Dick?"

"Dick is my cousin. He lives here."

"Here? Why, I have not seen him."

"Oh, no! He is away now."

"Away where?"

"He has gone with Old Joe. Once before he went away with Old Joe, and was gone a whole month. But I miss him so much, for I love him."

"Is his name Dick Delores?"

"I don't know. All I ever called him was just Dick. Oh, but he can shoot and ride, and Joe is teaching him everything he knows."

"How old is Dick?"

"One year older than I am."

"The boy we saw with the old Indian!" exclaimed Bart.

"The boy who saved my life!" said Merry, who then told Felicia what had happened at the entrance to the valley.

"That was Dick!" she cried, "and that was Old Joe! But why did Old Joe want to shoot at you?" she speculated, her face clouding. "He is papa's friend."

"He must have thought me your father's enemy," spoke Frank.

"He must," nodded Felicia, gravely. "Old Joe would not wish to shoot a friend."

"The mystery of the Indian and the boy is solved," said Merry.

"Still, it's rather singular," muttered Bart. "Why should Delores let the boy go with that old savage?"

"Papa sent Dick away with Old Joe," put in Felicia.

"Sent him away?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I don't know, but I think he was afraid the bad men would carry Dick off, same as they tried to carry me."

Frank's face showed that he was thinking deeply.

"Why should they carry Dick off?" he asked himself. "It must be that there is treasure buried near here, and they are seeking to wring it from Delores. But the man took extra precautions to protect the boy, while he did not seem to fear for the safety of his own child, as he left her entirely alone. There is much about this affair that is not clear to me."

Then Delores appeared at the door and announced that supper was ready.

They went back to the dining-room, Merry carrying little Felicia in his arms.

The room was quite as tasty as the living-room. In the center stood the table, covered by a clean, white cloth, with the dishes and food upon it. A sideboard had been built in the wall. The chairs

were of the rustic variety, plainly also the handwork of Delores. The cookroom, in an ell-like part of the cabin, was shut off from view by a swinging spring door.

"Welcome," said Delores.

"Thank you," bowed Frank. "Your hospitality is appreciated, you may be sure."

"That's right," said Bart, as his eyes ran over the table. "Don't believe I was ever hungrier."

They sat down, Delores at the head, with Felicia opposite. Frank and Bart sat on opposite sides of the table.

When they were seated, the little girl placed her soft, white hands together, bowed her head, and said "grace" in a simple, touching way.

Then, when the "amen" had risen from the lips of the three men at the table, Delores lifted the cover of a platter and revealed to view some broiled steak, the sight of which made Bart Hodge positively ravenous.

That supper was enjoyed by all. Delores smiled when he realized how hungry his visitors were, and he was pleased to see them satisfy the cravings of their appetites.

The conversation flowed on after a little, and Merry sought to satisfy Delores that he was no impostor; but the man was on his guard, and it was not easy to tell what thoughts were passing through his mind.

Then Frank told of the adventures at the entrance to the valley, relating how the old Indian had tried to frighten them from entering, and had declared that Juan Delores lived far away to the north.

"He faithful old fellow!" exclaimed Delores. "Once, long time ago, he come here very sick—just able to crawl to door. My wife, she take him in an' doctor him; she get him well, though he have da fever. He never forget. He do anyting for us."

"Even to commit murder," said Hodge. "He would have shot one or both of us if the boy had not hurled a rock and struck the barrel of his rifle."

Felicia clapped her hands.

"Dick can throw a rock just as straight!" she ex-

claimed. "Oh, he can do lots of things, and Old Joe has promised to teach him all the things he knows about the mountains, the prairies and the woods."

"His education is well begun," said Frank, "but it is the finishing off that will count."

"Oh, he can read and write and all dat!" quickly exclaimed Juan. "My wife, she be educated American, and she teach Dick and Felicia."

The laughter passed swiftly from the face of the girl, and she sadly said:

"Yes, mamma used to teach us every day, but Dick was so hard to teach—he was so wild. Now mamma is gone, and I have tried to teach myself; but Dick will not study at all."

Frank felt like asking Delores some questions about the mysterious boy with the old Indian, but, feeling that he had no right to do so, he refrained.

It seemed that Delores felt like explaining a part of the mystery, which led him to volunteer:

"Anton Mescal, he come after Dick. Dat why I let Old Joe take da boy. Old Joe protec' him."

"Then it is Dick, not Felicia, that Mescal wants?" Delores nodded.

"If you have da word, you would know dat," he declared.

And then it was that Merriwell began to feel that there was some strange, invisible link that connected himself with this wild boy of the mountains.

Delores had talked far more than usual with him and he suddenly showed a disposition to close up like a clam. Merry fancied it must be because he thought the conversation was getting on dangerous ground, and this caused Frank to lead it in another direction.

"How did you happen to settle here in this out-of-the-way place, Mr. Delores?" he asked. "Why did you build your home here in this thick piece of woods?"

"Hard to see it here," was the answer.

"Then you did not wish it seen?"

"No."

"And that was why you selected this valley, which

might be passed and repassed without finding a good way of descending into it?"

Delores nodded.

"It is a good place for a man who chooses the life of a hermit," said Bart, "but one is out of the world here."

"Dat not true," said Juan. "Dis is God's world here! Da mountain, da blue sky, da wild flower, da sweet air, da birds—it is God's world."

"It is beautiful!" murmured Felicia.

"But monotonous!" muttered Bart.

"Some men cannot choose," said Juan. "I was one of dat kind. I have to make my home where I can be safe."

"That's different," said Frank.

Somehow, Delores seemed to fancy that both visitors looked on him with suspicion after that speech, and he hastened to add:

"I do no crime—no. I do not'ing in this country to make me hide-a."

They looked at him in silence. Somehow, that seemed to sting him deeply, for he suddenly burst forth:

"If you knew! I have kep' da secret long—I have kep' da silence. Now Mescal, he know all 'bout it. How he find it out I do not know; but he will tell it everywhere. Da secret will be no longer one. Soon I shall have to go 'way from dis valley. I have t'ought dat some time."

"Oh, papa—oh, no, no, no!" cried Felicia, springing from her place and running round to him. "Go away from here? Leave my dear mamma out there all alone? Oh, no, no, no!"

Her distress was great, and the tears appeared in her deep, dark eyes. He caught her up and kissed her hair, holding her close to him.

"My little Felicia!" he said, huskily. "I 'fraid da time come when we must go; but, sometime, mebbe, we come back to put da sweet flower on mamma's grave."

"Oh, why should we go, papa?"

"Papa have great many enemy. Now da bad man

know him here da enemy may find out soon. Papa go 'way, so him not be hurt."

"Your cattle—what will you do with them?" asked Frank. "I suppose those are your cattle in the valley?"

"Yes, dem mine. I know way to drive dem out. I sell dem."

But still little Felicia was greatly distressed over the thought of going away and leaving her home. She knew no other home, and that one was very dear to her.

"Must we go, papa?" she sobbed. "Must we go?"

"I am 'fraid of dat," he nodded. "We find some place else to live."

Again he saw the visitors looking at him curiously.

"You t'ink I do somet'ing wrong?" he cried. "I do not'ing but fight for liberty. I make enemies dat swear to kill me if da follow me to da hot place. At first I feel no fear of dem. Den da gov'ment pronounce me outlaw—put da price on me! I have to fly from my country. My enemy follow. I have to fight for my life. I kill one, two, tree. Dat make dem worse. All da relation swear to find me an' take my head to da gov'ment. I find myself hunted man night an' day. Den, at last, when I marry beautiful American wife, for her sake I have to find place where we can live quiet. Den I come here, and we live here happy together."

It was an interesting and tragic story, and Merry did not doubt its truth. So this man, Juan Delores as he called himself, had been married to an American woman, who was the mother of Felicia.

Delores looked from one to the other of his visitors.

"You believe me?" he asked.

"Yes," said Frank, while Bart bowed.

"I tell you who I am," said the man. "Perhap' you have heard 'bout me."

He rose to his feet and stood there before them, looking proudly at them. There was in his pose now the manner of the born aristocrat. He smiled a little.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I am da Don Jose Maria Queypo de Llano Ruiz y de Saravia, of Spain!"

CHAPTER X.

BY THE MOONLIT LAKE.

Frank had heard of him, a Spanish refugee and outcast, a man of noble family, who had sacrificed himself and his fortune for what he firmly believed was right and justice.

"Count de Saravia!" exclaimed Frank.

"Yes," said the man.

Then he told them much of his story, and Felicia, who had known nothing of it herself, sat and listened in wondering silence.

But what the count told did not clear up the mystery that puzzled Frank.

After the supper was over, they returned to the living-room, where Merry opened the piano and played and sang.

Little Felicia sang for them. Finally she crept into her father's arms and fell asleep. He carried her off to bed, and Merry and Bart turned and faced each other.

"Well?" said Hodge.

"Strange," said Merry. "But the haze remains as deep as ever."

"Deeper, if anything."

"I feel like getting some air," said Frank.

Hodge would have accompanied him when he rose to go out, but instinct told Bart that Merry chose to be alone.

Frank passed along the deep wood path till he came to the open. The moon had risen in the east, and was shedding its silver radiance into Pleasant Valley. The little lake lay with a shimmering path of silver moonshine across it.

The scene was calm and peaceful enough. Frank stood on the edge of the shadowy woods and gazed upon the quiet valley. From far, far away came the cry of some prowling wild beast, but that was the only sound to break the calm of the peaceful night.

"She said the graves were up that way," Frank murmured. "I will see if I can find them."

After a time he came upon them. They were not far apart, with a great tree rising near at hand.

One of the graves had a granite stone at its head, and on the stone had been crudely chiseled the name, "Lucy."

Frank knew that was the grave of Felicia's mother.

The other grave had been lately made, and no stone rose above it.

"My father rests here!" murmured Frank, as he knelt beside that mound.

For some minutes he remained there, tears starting from his eyes and trickling slowly down his cheeks.

"Poor father!" came softly from his lips. "You never knew what real peace and happiness meant. Yours was a wild, strange life, and it seems fitting that you should die as you did. But, oh, what would I not have given to have been at your side! Perhaps I could have comforted you. To-morrow," he said, "I will bring flowers and place upon this mound. A stone shall be erected, and here, dear father, you will sleep your long, last sleep. At last you have found the peace and rest that was denied you in life. God knows what is best, and He doeth all things well."

When he turned away he felt in no mood to return to the cabin at once, so he wandered down toward the shimmering lake, which seemed calling to him in the soft whispers of passing breezes.

As he approached the lake, he passed beneath some wide-spreading trees, which gave a deep shadow.

Suddenly his attention was attracted by a moving object on the bosom of the lake. He paused and gazed, and the moonlight showed to him a canoe that seemed to be occupied by two persons.

The canoe was approaching the side of the lake on which Merry stood, and he could see the dripping paddle flash and shine in the moonlight, like a silver mirror.

Not a sound came from the canoe. There was no movement of either figure, save the swinging arms of the one in the stern, who plied the paddle.

Merriwell drew a little nearer to the shore, shielding himself carefully and waiting.

When the canoe was close in, he decided that it must contain the old Indian, Joe Crowfoot, and the strange boy.

Barely had the craft touched the shore when something very surprising took place.

Out from places of concealment leaped two men and flung themselves on the Indian and the boy. One of the men clutched the boy, who fought like a tiger-cat.

The other ruffian gave his attention to the old Indian, who whipped out a knife and met his attack. The man fired a shot, but the Indian closed in swiftly, as if not touched, and this forced the assailant to drop his revolver and bring forth a knife.

Then a deadly and terrible battle with knives took place there on the shore of Lake Sunshine. The knives were heard to strike and grate together as the foes met, hand to hand and face to face.

It was something to fascinate Merriwell, and, for the instant, he paused to stare at the spectacle. He saw the Indian's assailant was almost a giant, and a startling thought flashed through his mind:

"It's Gunnison Bill! I did not kill him, after all!"

"Now, redskin, I'm goin' ter carve yer up! I'll just rip yer inter ribbons in a minute!"

The voice was that of the big ruffian, and then Merry knew beyond a doubt that the man was Gunnison Bill.

A cry came from the lips of the boy, arousing Frank from the strange lethargy that seemed to have seized him.

Without a sound, the young Yale athlete leaped toward the spot where the boy was doing his best in the struggle with the man who had clutched him.

"I think I'll take a hand here!" exclaimed Merry, as he sprang upon the man.

It was the companion of Gunnison Bill, who had escaped on Frank's mustang.

Startled by Merry's sudden appearance, the fellow whirled about, trying to fling the boy aside.

The moonlight fell full on his face.

"Anton Mescal!" cried Merriwell, exultantly. "At last I have found you!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE RECOVERY OF THE MESSAGE.

"Frank Merriwell!" gasped Mescal, for it was the scoundrel who had snatched the message from Merry in the New York hotel.

"Yes!" shouted Merry, as he fastened his hands upon the fellow. "I believed fate would bring us together here! Now I shall recover the message you stole from me!"

"Never!"

"I shall take it!"

"Never!"

"We'll see!"

"You'll have to kill me first!"

"Then I shall kill you!" came the cold, hard words from Frank's lips.

"Bill! Bill!" cried Mescal. "Help, Bill!"

"Bill is having his hands full," said Merry. "Old Joe Crowfoot is attending to him."

"He can kill that old dog in a minute!"

"Perhaps, but Old Joe may get in a few licks while he is doing it."

A fierce struggle between Frank and Mescal ensued. Mescal was no match for the young athlete, but he felt that he was fighting for all that he desired and held dear, so he put up a stiff struggle for a while.

At last Merry forced the fellow to his knees, fastening a clutch on Mescal's throat.

"Give up?"

"Curse you—no!" hoarsely breathed Mescal.

Merry's fingers shut off the man's wind, and it seemed that the bones cracked beneath that pressure. Still the desperado fought to the last, though he gradually grew weaker and weaker.

Merry choked the man into insensibility. Having done this, he began to search his clothes for the message. In course of time he found it, within an inner pocket.

Merriwell opened the message and looked at it by the aid of the moonlight.

"Thank Heaven!" he said. "I have it again! This is the message my father wrote and sent to me."

He had been so absorbed that he was quite unaware of anything else that was taking place. Now, having thrust the message into his pocket, he rose and looked around.

To his amazement, the canoe, containing the old Indian and the boy, was gliding swiftly away over the lake, while on the shore lay the bleeding body of Gunnison Bill.

In the knife duel the ruffian had met more than his match in Old Joe, who had ended the career of the desperado.

Gunnison Bill's life of evil-doing was over.

Frank called to the Indian and the boy, urging them to return, saying he was a friend; but they paid not the least heed, and the canoe kept on till it melted into the shadow along a distant shore.

Anton Mescal lay quite still on the shore, and Frank feared he had killed the fellow. However, on kneeling by the side of the scoundrel and feeling for his heart-beats, Merry found that life remained in Mescal's body.

"He'll recover," Merry decided. "I think I'll truss him up."

So he lifted Mescal and carried him up the bank to a large tree. The unconscious villain was placed in a sitting position on the ground, with his back against the tree, after which Merry stripped up the man's coat and bound him in that position.

Having disposed of Mescal thus, Frank went back to where the other wretch lay sprawled upon the shore.

But Gunnison Bill's light had gone out forever, and Frank found it was useless to touch the body then.

Filled with triumph, Frank hastened back toward the cabin home of Delores.

On the way he met Hodge.

"I thought I heard a shot," said Bart. "Didn't know but you were in trouble, and that brought me out hot-foot."

Hodge was ready for anything.

"You did hear a shot," said Frank. "It was fired by Gunnison Bill."

"Gunnison Bill? Why, he's dead!"

"You are right; he is dead now; but we did not leave him dead in the timber over yonder, as we fancied."

"Didn't? What has happened, Merry? Tell me as quick as you can."

But Bart could scarcely believe the story Frank had to tell.

"You met Mescal there?" he exclaimed, joyously; "and you have the message?"

"Safe in my pocket," said Frank. "I shall read it to-night."

"I told Delores I would go out and see what the shot meant. He remained to guard Felicia. Let's return and let him know there is no danger."

So they went to the cabin, where they found Delores waiting, rifle in hand, for anything that might occur.

When Delores heard Merry's story he was even more excited than Bart.

"Mescal out there?" he panted. "Dat man must not git away! Take me to dat man! He know my secret, an' he be my enemy!"

It was not without serious misgivings that Merry led the way to the spot where the struggle had taken place on the shore of the lake. He found an opportunity to whisper to Bart:

"Watch him! We can't stand by and see him murder Mescal, no matter what Mescal may have done."

But when they came to the tree where Frank had bound Mescal, they found the man had recovered, broken his bonds and escaped.

Delores was like a hound on the scent, and he fol-

lowed the trail till it ran into a piece of timber, where it was lost for the time.

"But I'll take it up in da morning!" declared the refugee. "He must make da fast track if he get away."

The body of Gunnison Bill they buried that night not far from where he fell.

And then, with Bart in the room where they were to sleep, Frank Merriwell brought forth and read the strange and startling message sent him by his dying father.

CHAPTER XII.

WHAT THE MESSAGE CONTAINED.

That mesage gave Merriwell the greatest surprise of his life, for it told how Charles Conrad Merriwell, Frank's father, after his first wife's death, had married another woman, whom he met in the West. And it told how, by this second wife, Mr. Merriwell had had one son, Richard, who was thus a half-brother to Frank. But Mr. Merriwell had been hunted by his bitter enemy, Dion Santenel, and never had his life been anything but one of trouble and fear. It was not such a life as would make a wife happy and contented. Fearing Santenel might find his wife and strike him, through her, Mr. Merriwell had hidden her away in a safe retreat. But she was frail and delicate, and she had not survived long after the birth of her boy.

The second Mrs. Merriwell was a sister to the wife of the man known as Juan Delores, and so to Juan Charles Merriwell took the motherless boy, Richard. Juan had raised Richard there in that hidden valley as if the boy were his own son, and there he had been happy and contented, with Felicia, his cousin, for his only playmate.

When fate had brought Charles Merriwell and his first son together once more, the lips of the man remained sealed concerning a portion of his life. Thus it happened that Frank Merriwell had never suspected the existence of a half-brother.

But, when the end came, Charles Merriwell sum-

moned strength to write a full confession. As he wrote it, he knew he had been followed about by men who sought to wrest from him in some manner his great fortune, or a portion of it, and it was his fear that they might succeed after he was dead.

He sent Delores to Denver for a reliable messenger to take the precious document to Frank. The messenger employed was a detective belonging to an agency in the city, and he executed his trust faithfully, for all that Anton Mescal, aware of his purpose, followed him all the way to the Atlantic coast, seeking to get possession of the precious document in the oilskin envelope.

How Mescal finally succeeded the reader knows.

In the confession Charles Merriwell charged his son Frank to take care of Richard, bring him up properly, be both brother and father to him.

"He is a frail lad in some ways," wrote the dying man, "and he should be trained and built up until he possesses a marvelous physique, like your own, Frank. I give him into your hands for this task. He is your brother, and I charge you to make a man of him—such a man as you yourself have become. I am proud of you, Frank, for you are a son to make any father proud. Dick is like you in some ways, but he is unlike you in many. He is wild, impulsive, passionate, and hard to govern; but I believe you can mold him into a splendid man. You know I am rich, and I leave all my wealth to be divided between you and Richard, in case you carry out my instructions faithfully. The will, which Juan Delores will give to you when you come to him with the word, will make everything clear. He will also turn over into your care your brother Richard. I think there is no danger but you will be faithful to this duty I have left you, but, should you fail to take charge of Richard and care for him, you will see by the will that you are cut off from ever receiving a dollar of my wealth."

Frank felt a twinge of pain as he read this.

"Why did he have to write that?" he thought, regretfully. "Ah! he did not know me well, or he

would have been certain I would do everything in my power to carry out his instructions."

Later on in the message was given "the word" which Frank was to speak to Delores.

Hodge had seen enough to know how deeply Frank was touched, and he retired as quietly as possible, leaving Merry sitting there reading that astonishing revelation over and over again.

The night was far spent before Frank lay down to sleep. His slumber was filled with dreams, and more than once he murmured:

"Richard—Richard, my brother!"

* * * * *

In the morning Frank spoke "the word" to Juan Delores, saying:

"I have recovered the mesasge that was stolen from me by Anton Mescal, and I have read it over and over. I wish to see my brother."

Delores bowed.

"You shall see him soon," he promised.

Then he went away somewhere, and, after a time, returned with the last will and testament of Charles Conrad Merriwell, which he placed in the hands of Frank.

"I was convinced last night," he said, "dat it b'long to you; but I had to swear to your father dat I never give it to any one who fail to bring da word. What could I do? I did not know. I t'ink I find some way to let you know da word after you giye me all da proof dat you be Frank Merriwell."

"You have been faithful and true, Mr. Delores," said Merry, with a hand on the shoulder of the man. "I shall not forget. A Merriwell never forgets."

"Dat all right," asserted Juan, flushing. "But had we foun' Mescal last night, I t'ink I would feel better now."

"I do not believe Mescal will trouble any of us again," said Frank. "It was his object to keep me from finding out what I was to do, so that I would not comply with the terms of the will. If I failed to take care of my brother, I was to have no part in the property left by my father. A false Richard

might have been substituted, and there are a dozen schemes whereby Mescal could have profited had he succeeded; but he failed utterly, and now he will have to look out for himself."

At this moment Felicia, laughing gayly, appeared at the open door of the cabin, calling:

"Oh, Frank, come out!"

Merry had told her on the previous evening that she was to call him Frank.

"What do you want?" smiled Merriwell.

"Come and see," she urged. "I have a surprise for you. Oh, come quick!"

Laughing, he complied. She grasped him by the hand and led him round the cabin.

There, standing where the morning sunshine fell through an opening in the Black Woods, were two persons, an old and wrinkled Indian and a bright-faced, dark-eyed boy.

Frank was face to face with his brother!

THE END.

The next number (275) will contain "Frank Merriwell's Brother; or, Training a Wild Spirit."

LATEST ISSUES.

- 272—Frank Merriwell's Steadiness; or, The Great Yale-Harvard Contests.
- 271—Frank Merriwell's Escape; or, The Girl Who Hated Him.
- 270—Frank Merriwell's Trick; or, His Battle with Himself.
- 269—Frank Merriwell's Great Victory; or, The Effort of His Life.
- 268—Frank Merriwell's Judgment; or, The Man Who Won.
- 267—Frank Merriwell's Deception; or, Celebrating Omega Lambda Chi.
- 266—Frank Merriwell's Eyes; or, Saving an Enemy.
- 265—Frank Merriwell's Struggle; or, The Strongest Man in the World.
- 264—Frank Merriwell's Coach; or, How the Freshmen Won.
- 263—Frank Merriwell in Form; or, The Wonderful Athlete of the Scarred Face.
- 262—Frank Merriwell Deceived; or, Jimmy Lee, of Charlottesville.
- 261—Frank Merriwell's Bosom Friend; or, Making Up the Yale Nine.
- 260—Frank Merriwell's Sweetheart; or, The Girl to Whom He Proposed.
- 259—Frank Merriwell's Trust; or, The Mystery of the Black Stick.
- 258—Frank Merriwell's Suspicion; or, The Girl from Maine.
- 257—Frank Merriwell's Hand; or, Saved from the Snare.
- 256—Frank Merriwell's Mysterious Move; or, Thirteen Pieces of Silver.
- 255—Frank Merriwell's Scheme; or, The Daring Deception of Dr. Cloud.
- 254—Frank Merriwell's Club; or, Indoor Baseball in Baltimore.
- 253—Frank Merriwell's Skill; or, Liz, the Girl Wrecker.

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APPLAUSE.

I think your Tip Top Weekly is the best of the kind I ever read. You will find inclosed a coupon filled out, as I am trying for prize for boys from twelve to sixteen. I am in hopes of getting a prize.
Lewiston, Me.

ALWIN S. ATKINS.

Thank you. Keep right at work training. You have just as much chance of winning as any one else.

Hurrah for the new Physical Culture Department! Inclosed find my measurements, for I am going to try and build myself up. This is my first letter and I hope to see it published. I am a constant reader of the Tip Top Weekly and I have read lots of other kinds, but the Tip Top is the best. I think every one of the flock is all right, but I like Frank best and think he made a good piece of judgment about Hock Mason.
Alliance, Ohio.

EDD HARTZELL.

Hock is a fine fellow. We are glad you appreciate his good qualities.

Though far from satisfied at first I am now delighted with the termination of Frank's love affair. I think every Elsieite was somewhat disappointed at first, but come to look at it in a true light Mr. Standish's way is best. Fair-haired Elsie is still my favorite, but I think dear old Bart is entirely worthy of her. Hurrah for them all! Though a girl, I have taken considerable interest in the Physical Culture Department. I have a great desire to be strong and I take gymnasium exercises daily, which I think has made a decided improvement in me. Wishing the whole Tip Top League health and prosperity,
Nashville, Tenn.

NORMA ST. CLAIR.

Thank you for the pleasant letter. We are glad to hear of the girls who are interested in Physical Culture. It will do them great good to follow it.

It was a great man who said "reading is the gate to knowledge," and since such is the case, while we are reading I think it best that we should only read that which will elevate us in our struggle toward success. Of all the publications that I have read and have taken any interest in the Tip Top Weekly stands the peer of them all, and I do candidly believe it to be by far the best publication of its kind printed anywhere in America. That my belief is shared by many needs no second saying, as your Applause Column speaks for itself. When you enlarged your magazine it simply showed the favor in which your worthy paper is held by

the young men and women of this country. But of the many thousand readers that you doubtless have I think it would be safe to say that of that number there are many old men and not a few old women who take almost as great an interest in the welfare of America's leading publication as do the young boys and girls. A paper can best be judged by the character, the quality and the variety of its readers, and by the number of readers it has, namely, its circulation. Your paper, then, stands alone as the leading five-cent paper of the world, carrying the largest circulation of any paper anywhere.
Pensacola, Fla.

A WEST FLORIDA ADMIRER.

Thank you. Your enthusiastic praise is most gratifying.

I am sending in my measurements, hoping to win a prize. I am going to follow your exercises and see if I can't win one. I have read quite a number of your weeklies and think they are the best published. All the boys around are reading the Tip Top.
Newark, N. J.

RICHARD DURKIN.

Thank you.

I have always been a strong admirer of Tip Top and remain the same now. We have organized a baseball team and named it Tip Top. We played one five-inning game and won by a score of fourteen to six. One of our number, a very witty fellow, has been nicknamed Ready, and he truly deserves the name.
Sandy Hill, N. Y.

R. C. BAILEY.

Thank you. Good luck to your team.

Not seeing a letter from our town, I thought I would write you and express my thoughts of the Tip Top, which is true to its name in every respect. I have read all from No. 1 to date and wish they were published daily or even tri-weekly instead of only once a week. Next to Frank I admire Bart, Diamond and Rattles, respectively. Hoping to see this letter in print,
Wilmington, N. C.

AN OLD FRIEND OF TIP TOP.

Thank you.

It is with great pleasure that I regard the change in your Tip Top Weekly. The Physical Culture Department is the very thing that has been most needed by the youthful readers of America. The boy that will really try to emulate Frank Merriwell, and faithfully follow Professor Fourmen's advice, cannot be anything but perfect. I will close with three cheers for Street & Smith, the publishers without a rival.
Russell, Ky.

EMERY CLARKE.

Thank you.

Having read all of your famous Tip Tops, I take the liberty to write you and tell you how much I have enjoyed them. I am going to make a proposition to some of the young readers of the Tip Top who have written such excellent poems. If some of them will write a poem on the Tip Tops and Frank, I will write the music to it and we will have a rousing old Tip Top song. If any one wants to do this, they can send their poem to Street & Smith, and I will receive it through the Applause Column. Excuse me for this long letter, and mistakes.
Watertown, S. D.

B. S.

We think yours is a good suggestion. The editor of Tip Top will receive all poems, and the one which seems most appropriate will be selected as the Tip Top Anthem, to which you have kindly offered to write the music. Here is a great chance for our poets.

I have been a constant reader of the Tip Top Weekly now for the last year. Up to that time I had been reading other publications, but was simply disgusted with all of them. I did not have much faith in it when I bought the first Tip Top, but when I was through reading it, I just got rid of the other ones as soon as possible. Then I bought all the Tip Tops from No. 1 up to the present number, and can honestly say that it is the best weekly published. The Physical Culture Department is a grand success, and something all readers should take up for their own

good, because it is just as Frank says, there is nothing like a strong body and a clear head to see you through life. Inclosed find my coupon; I have already started with the determination that there is no such thing as failure if you stick to it. Three cheers for Burt L. Standish and Street & Smith; may the Tip Top Weekly have a long life.

HERMAN UHLIG.

Philadelphia, Pa.

Thank you. We are glad to receive your enthusiastic letter. Your coupon has been properly filed. Good luck to you.

I will write you a few lines to let you know what I think of your admirable library. It is truly a tip top book, and I think it is king of them all. The first number I read was 265, and that was only a few days ago, and since then I have secured all the numbers. What attracted my attention when I first looked over the book was Physical Culture Department and the athletic contest, and I have decided to enter it. I hope it is not too late, as I see all preliminary coupons must be in by July 17th. The only book I read now is the Tip Top library, the king of them all. I hope that this letter will be published in one of your books. I will now close, as I fear my letter will be too long.

Philadelphia, Pa.

FRANK J. MCKINNEY.

Thank you. May you long continue to be a Tip Topper. It will pay you well.

I hope the following, poor as it is, will inspire Mr. Standish (now the favorite of all boys and girls), to continue for many years his excellent work, the Tip Top Weekly. It was written by me because I was urged to do so by the Brooklyn readers of that Mr. Standish settled the Inza and Elsie question as he did, Tip Top, who wish it will never stop.

Oh, thanks to thee, oh, author grand!
For thy work, read o'er all the land
By youthful lad and lass.
'Tis the finest of all the books,
Judged both by reading and by looks,
That e'er been printed has.

Grateful thousands thy stories read—
Thousands of ev'ry land and creed,
Who shout their joyful praise.
They wish thee joy and happiness,
Wish thee a long life, and they bless
Thee for thy book—the "craze."

They say to thee, may it e'er come
To be welcomed in ev'ry home
By all the family.
May its victories never stop,
And may its laurels never drop.
This they all entreat thee.

Write thy story, add to thy fame,
Make thy honored and well-known name
Cheered in every land.
The flag of thy fame floats on high
Beneath the blue dome of the sky—
It does. Oh, author grand!

Among the youth of this broad land,
Thy prestige forever will stand,
And they all hope to see
Your good, moral work thrive for years.
Thy fame, among the youth, now nears
Great immortality.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

ERIC H. PALMER.

Thank you. We see that our Tip Top poets are at work, and their verses, so enthusiastic in praise, so filled with admiration, afford us the most gratifying reward for our efforts.

Some people say, "I do not want my boy to read weeklies because it will affect his brain." This is, to some extent, true, but Tip Top Weekly fits its name; it is tip top. There is no bloodthirsty nonsense in it. Every American boy should read it. Physical Culture, which you publish in the back of Tip

Top, is as good, and better, than any other book you can have, and I congratulate Professor Fourmen on making such a choice for the back of Tip Top. Now the characters of this weekly are all the best; no slang is used by any of Merriwell's friends; very seldom you see slang at all, unless it is used by some street tough connected with the story. I hope that Tip Top, the American boy's great weekly, will always progress as it is progressing now.

New York.

HARRY ACHESON.

Thank you.

I see in your Tip Top Weekly that all coupons must be handed in on or before Monday, July 17th. As I have been sick, I haven't had time to fill out the coupons, so I measured myself this morning, and send you the result. I haven't had time to get one of my pictures taken, but I will send you one before Saturday. I think your Tip Top Weekly is the best there is, and I am glad you have made it larger. Hoping good success to Street & Smith, and to Burt Standish.

Flemington, N. J.

NORMAN KLINE.

Thank you. We will expect your picture.

Good old Merriwell, the king athlete of all,
Who saved old Yale from many a downfall;
Of physical culture he is a great advocate,
Boys, follow his example before its too late;
A very fine husband for Inza he'd make,
And Dick Starbright for his wife Elsie could take;
I hope that these matches will only be made,
And their wedding expenses would gladly be paid
By the many admirers Frank has made.
To hear of Frank's marriage we would all rejoice,
And congratulate him all in one voice.

Pittsburg, Pa.

ED BERCKMULLER.

Thank you.

This is the first time you have ever heard from me. I have been reading the Tip Top Weekly for a long time, and think it is the best weekly published. Frank is a fine fellow, and a good model for the boys. Bart Hodge seems to be Frank's closest friend, and Frank is the only one who understands Bart. There is a good deal of fun when Hans and Barney get together. Bruce Browning is lazy, but he shows no laziness whenever he gets after Ready for joking about him. Harry Rattleton never goes back on Frank, and always says Frank will win. Jack Diamond is a fine fellow, and a fighter, when aroused. Big Dick Starbright might be proud to be called Frank's protégé. Bink and Danny are all right. Jack Ready is a great joker, and Joe Gamp's stuttering is good. I think Frank did splendidly on the gridiron last fall, and wish him success on the diamond. About the Inza-Elsie question, I thought Frank would marry Elsie, but I am glad it came out the way it did. I am glad Dade Morgan is one of Merriwell's friends, and hope Skelding and Defarge become Frank's friends. Mr. Standish is a great writer, and must spend a great deal of time finding something to write about. I live in the President's town, and four years ago I saw the delegates from all over the Union while they were here. Wishing success to Street & Smith, and Mr. Standish forever.

Canton, O.

C. E. W.

Thank you. Your summary of the Tip Top characters is fine. You show that you know them all most intimately.

Seeing no applause from our town, I thought that I would write and let you know that I am a steady reader of the Tip Top. It did not surprise me much to hear of Frank and Inza, for I think that they will enjoy their older days as well as their young days. I admire Frank, Bart, Jack, Dick and Bruce, and hoping that Elsie will get a good husband, as I am sure she will, I remain a constant reader,

Sibley, Ia.


E. J. E.

Thank you.

Tip Top Physical Culture Department

"IT IS A CRIME TO BE WEAK"

Edited by Prof. FOURMEN



SWIMMING AS AN ATHLETIC SPORT.

Strangely enough, man is not a born swimmer, while many animals need no teaching to be able to strike out for themselves. But there are many reasons why every boy, man and woman should know how to swim. Indeed, if only as an athletic exercise, swimming is a most valuable means of development. So I have decided to add this method of training to our present list.

The beginner must learn to stretch out his body horizontally to its fullest extent near the surface of the water, and keep the legs closed, toes turned outward, back hollowed and the head turned back.

These points having been carefully noted, the leg movement should be proceeded with as follows:

Leg Movement.

Turn the toes outward to the right and left, respectively, with the heels nearly touching; draw up the feet gently toward the body somewhat above the level of the back, and as they near the body separate the feet a few inches. When drawn up, the soles of the feet should be at right angles to the surface of the water and just below the surface, while the knees should be turned outward to the right and left, and not drawn up too much under the body.

To develop the next movement the legs must be smartly kicked in the outward direction to their widest extent without straining the thighs.

As soon as the legs have been straightened, continue the stroke without interruption by closing the legs with vigor until they nearly touch each other in line with the body—here is where the toes are turned downward, slashing the water with the soles of the feet—preparatory to bringing them up into the first position.

Hand Movement.

It is essential that the hands should be kept flat with the palms downward during the recovery, as this assists in a great measure in sustaining the body on the surface and also prevents the friction which would naturally arise if the hands from the wrists should be dropped as to present the back of the hand to the line of progression. As far as the holding of the hands flat at the first position is concerned, it is immaterial at the start, but as soon as the body is in motion, the keeping of the hands

flat adds directly to progression. It may seem but a slight matter, but it is these small details, carefully studied, which tend to accelerate the speed of swimmers.

In order to make my instructions perfectly clear I shall divide the arm movement into three actions, as in the leg stroke; the pupil is supposed to be straightened:

1. Turn the palms of the hands slightly outward and take a backward sweeping stroke, continuing the pressure until the hands and arms are brought nearly to a right angle with the body in line with the shoulder. Then gently close the arms to the chest. As soon as the pressure of the backward sweeping stroke ceases, the hands should be immediately flattened.

2. Draw the elbows nearly to the side, at the same time bringing the forearm and hands up to the front of the chest, with the palms of the hands next the chest and near the surface of the water. The fingers should be extended and closed.

3. Push the hands forward directly in front of you until the arms are at their full extent, still keeping the hands about two or three inches from the surface, and pause slightly before repeating the first movement, giving the body a chance to appreciate the power applied by the legs.

The Overhand Side-Stroke.

In this stroke—the one used by all the fast men in England, Australia and this country—it is a matter of choice on which side the body is turned.

Swimming with the left side toward the surface does not impede the action of the heart, and the organs of digestion are kept free from pressure. For the purpose of clear description it will be best to imagine the swimmer is in the water lying on the right side.

Lower Arm Stroke.

At the start, the lower arm should be pulled downward toward the hips, in a plain perpendicular to the surface, the fingers being kept closed and the hand flat, so as to present a large surface to the water. When this stroke is finished, the hand should be turned quickly, palm upward, so that together with the lower part of the arm it cuts the water sideways, the arm being almost

bent double. Then, as it is shot forward, the hand is gradually turned from palm downward, until, when it arrives at its position in front of the head, and almost at the surface, it is ready for the next stroke. The recovery ought to be effected much more quickly than the "pull," as in the former the water practically only offers resistance to the upper part of the arm; but during the down stroke the whole arm and hand have to be dragged through it.

Upper Arm Stroke.

The upper or left-arm stroke is started when the downward stroke of the under or right arm is finished. It begins about half a foot in front of the face. The arm is slightly bent to work clear of the chest, the palm and thumb pointing downward. The pull in most cases is taken with the arm bent a little as it enters the water, but in others the hand is brought under the chest, and then, with the arm bent at right angles, swept back close to the body, the arm gradually straightening as it leaves the water. This stroke should not be made too long, either at the beginning or at the finish, as the effect of the power applied is greater when the hand is opposite the shoulder. At the end of the pull, that is, when the hand is opposite the waist, it should be brought smartly out of the water, and carried quickly forward through the air to recommence its work. In the recovery the fingers are kept near but not touching the surface of the water. As the upper arm enters the water the legs should begin to open for the leg stroke. They should be in the position for beginning the kick when the hand is about six inches from the knee, and the kick should be completed and the legs straightened just as the under arm is half through its work—just as the right hand is pointing toward the bottom. With this movement, called the "alternate movement," the left hand appears to slap the left knee just as the kick is started, but in reality never comes closer than three inches.

Leg Movement.

The leg movement is described as follows: From the straightened position, the legs are drawn up close to each other and near the body; they are opened and brought together again simultaneously, the left or upper leg being kicked out forward as in running, the knee straightened and the power applied with the back of the calf and sole of the foot. The right or lower leg is bent almost double, until the heel nearly touches the thigh, the tendon Achilles acting as a cut-water, and the foot swinging as on a hinge, so that there is really very little resistance. The sweep is then made simultaneously with the upper leg, the power in this case coming from the entire front of the leg from the toe to the knee. In the effective part of the stroke the left foot is straightened with a stamp at the same time that the right leg meets it with a vicious kick. As the legs come together, the wash from the upper meets the swirl from the lower, and helps considerably to send the body forward.

In trying to perfect himself in this stroke, the beginner will find that the position of the head requires great attention. He must be able to breathe correctly and at the proper time. About forty-five strokes are taken to the minute for a hundred-yard swim, and at each stroke a breath is taken as the upper arm is in the recovery. The exhalation must be going on all the remaining time, the waste air being forced out the nostrils.

Training.

The training of the majority of swimmers consists simply of a few ordinary practice swims before a race, but here and there are to

be found those who religiously train through the season, and generally with marked improvement to their capabilities.

Good Digestion.

makes its appearance.

The great thing in all training is to prevent derangement of the stomach, and to correct it as soon as it

Walking.

Long-distance walking is the best form of exercise for a swimmer, as the muscles are thereby strengthened and staying power developed. At every available opportunity a distance walk into the country should be taken.

The amount of practice that a swimmer should take in the water must be regulated by his habits and social position. If engaged during the day, the only time for practice is in the morning or evening; and I incline to the opinion that the principal work should be done at the latter time. Some men can stand early morning swims as well, but many get stale if they practice both morning and evening.

Training for Speed.

The training for speed by amateurs should not be overdone. If a swimmer does his work in the evening, he should take care not to tire himself during the day. His first spins should be about thirty yards at top speed, a rub down, and then another sprint of fifty yards. This is quite sufficient water practice, and after a careful toweling a brisk walk should be taken. This training will perfectly suit a man entered for a hundred-yard race. Occasionally the full distance should be done against the watch.

General Hints.

In conclusion, let me add a few bits of advice which the aspirant for swimming honors might do well to remember and profit by.

Be ready for the pistol and do not make too deep a dive.

Keep a straight course throughout the entire distance and remember a yard lost in a mile race means more than a second gained for the opponent.

Be careful about your breathing. It is hardly pleasant to find the lungs half filled with water by mistake.

Never swim in a long race unless accompanied by a boat. The risks are too great.

A liberal coating of vaseline on the stomach will help keep away the action of cold water.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

ALL QUESTIONS TO PROF. FOURMEN should be addressed to 238 William street, New York City, in care of Street & Smith.

PROF. FOURMEN:

When I swing in a hammock, whether sitting or lying, I am affected with nausea for at least an hour after I have stopped swinging. If I lie down in the daytime and go to sleep, when I wake up I am affected in the same manner, except that I am sick for the balance of the day. Please state the cause and a cure for this trouble.

W. D. MARBOURG.

In all probability yours is a nervous affection which you will outgrow. I would strongly advise you to lead an active out-of-door life, avoiding such things as seem to nauseate you. Do not sleep during the day, but spend the time in training or exercise of some active kind. Take a cold bath every morning, followed by a brisk rubdown. By strengthening your general system you can overcome local disturbances.

PROF. FOURMEN:

I had my left arm broken not long ago. It is smaller than the right, and they told me to write to you for your advice, so I thought I would. Do you think I will win a prize?

JOE NEGRO.

The fact that your left arm was broken some time ago will of course, retard its development. This misfortune, however, will not count against you in the contest. Favor your weak arm as much as possible.

PROF. FOURMEN:

I am not taking any exercising right now, but what would you advise me to begin with? I have been smoking cigarettes, but have stopped. I go to bed at night at eleven and get up at five, and then take a walk before breakfast, which I have at six-thirty; dinner at twelve; supper at six.

EDWARD C. BRADFORD.

Begin with exercises I have already advised for all young athletes. You have done well to stop cigarette smoking. Don't take it up again. Go to bed earlier than you do if possible, for it is important to get all the sleep you can.

PROF. FOURMEN:

As you answer any questions in regard to physical culture, I would like to ask a few. 1. If a person wished to become a long distance runner, what exercise is most important?

2. I have been accustomed to drink several cups of coffee every morning for breakfast. But, as you said, it was not good to drink coffee, I would like to ask what do you advise me to drink at meals in place of coffee?

E. R. E.

1. Get yourself in good general condition and then each day run a short distance, increasing your speed and the distance as you find yourself able to do so. Do not start too fast nor run too far at first. When you feel you are straining yourself stop running. Rub your legs and thighs well with alcohol or witch hazel each night. This applies to long distance runs.

2. Drink milk if you can get it—if not, there is nothing that will do you more good and less harm than plenty of pure water.

PROF. FOURMEN:

Would you please state through your column in the Tip Top how to gain flesh. I missed the number giving directions how to take exercise.

CAL. M.

You will find my directions in general training in Tip Top No. 265. It will pay you to read them, for by following this advice you are sure to gain weight as well as develop yourself proportionately.

PROF. FOURMEN:

My right leg is one-half inch shorter than my left one and is smaller in comparison with the left limb. Could you suggest any way in which I could develop my right limb?

FLOYD.

One of the best ways to correct this trouble is to try the "dip" exercise described in Tip Top. The single "dip" will do you much good.

PROF. FOURMEN:

I am a boy thirteen years old. I am growing too fast. What do you advise?

J. ROGERS.

Take plenty of out-of-door exercise. Live in the open air as much as you can. Don't allow yourself to believe that you are nervous. You think too much about it. Follow my course of training; and in a short time you will see how much improved you will be.

PROF. FOURMEN:

Would you please tell me the best exercises to cut down the superfluous fat on a person's arms and body. And also to strengthen lungs.

A. READER.

Train your muscles up and that will train your fat down. Take plenty of systematic exercise such as I have already advised. To increase your lung capacity make it a point to breathe deeply while you exercise; also devote from five to

ten minutes twice a day in breathing practice, inspiring and expiring as deeply as you can.

PROF. FOURMEN:

I am a boy of fourteen years of age and wish to develop myself the best I can. I am boarding and cannot have such food as you suggested in the last Tip Top. Will you kindly suggest something that will develop me in a general way.

CHAS. F. MANNER.

If you cannot follow my diet table, take this hint from it. Eat simple, good and nourishing food. Train yourself according to my directions to all young athletes who desire to become developed all round.

PROF. FOURMEN:

I have been playing tennis for one hour daily in place of running. Is it beneficial? I have had the advantage of a splendid gymnasium for a year. Would it be fair for me to try for the Tip Top Athletic prize? Kindly advise if it would.

G. E. VANDOORN.

Tennis is an excellent game for general exercise. Don't play the game, however, to the exclusion of other athletic sports. It will be perfectly fair for you to compete for the prizes. To improve your present form will certainly require much work.

PROF. FOURMEN:

1. Is taking a cold bath and a short run before breakfast, and some light work on the bar, putting the shot, and jumping after breakfast beneficial? 2. What would you call a general course of training? I can expand my chest three inches and a half. Is that called a good expansion? Are hot cakes good for you for breakfast?

E. A. M.

1. A cold bath before breakfast is excellent. The exercises you speak of will do you much good. 2. A general course of training was described in my first paper in the Physical Culture Department. Your chest expansion is good. Eat little hot bread of any kind.

CONTEST NOTES.

There are now 500 entries in the contest. The first class has made the best showing so far, having a total of 267 entries.

There is plenty of room in the third class. Come, boys, you can do just as well as the older competitors.

Milwaukee has sent in a fine collection of entries this week. The West seems to have the best chances just at present.

What do you think of our Tip Top athletes whose pictures have appeared in the gallery? Why not make a place for yourself among them? We want to see some of the younger boys in the gallery.

The following names of contestants were received this week:

Abands, Ferd	Donaghue, Ambrose	McKenzie, W. W.
Acheson, Harry B.	Fryl, John L.	O'Rourke, George
Armstrong, Fred. M.	Gagnon, Geo.	Plummer, Vernon
Brose, Henry C.	Gagnon, Chas.	Piper, Laurence
Boswell, J. G.	Gregory, George	Penn, Fred H.
Burton, H. G.	Gardner, J. W.	Pugh, Chas.
Berkman, Julius S.	Gonzalez, Joseph	Patterson, F. W., Jr.
Clay, Everett	Giett, Bert A.	Ransdell, John
Clutton, Paul	Hamilton, A. M.	Rein, Harry M.
Clarke, George A.	Jewell, Carlos	Sullivan, W.
Castens, Henry, Jr.	Kerfoot, Lee	Stewart, James W.
Daniel, Ramnr	Kline, Norman C.	Towns, Glen B.
Downey, Geo. F.	Mallon, Chas.	Westover, T.
	McCafferty, Michael	

NEXT WEEK'S PHYSICAL CULTURE DEPARTMENT WILL CONTAIN AN INTERESTING ARTICLE ON

BOXING.

9 Magnificent 9 Complete Training 9 PRIZES OUTFITS 9

A GRAND OPPORTUNITY

Read Carefully the Following List of Prizes:

FIRST CLASS.

Open to Young Men Between 16 and 21 Years of Age.

First Prize.

1. A Spalding's "Expert" Punching Bag.
2. A Set of Championship Boxing Gloves. No. 40.
3. A Whiteley Exerciser. No. 1.
4. A Pair of Indian Clubs. No. 15.
5. A "Shaker" Sweater. No. 3.

SECOND CLASS.

Open to Boys Between 12 and 16 Years of Age.

First Prize.

1. A Spalding's "Expert" Punching Bag.
2. A Set of Championship Boxing Gloves. No. 40.
3. A Whiteley Exerciser. No. 1.
4. A Pair of Indian Clubs. No. 15.
5. A "Shaker" Sweater.

Second Prize.

1. A Spalding's "Expert" Punching Bag.
2. A Set of Championship Boxing Gloves. No. 4.
3. A Whiteley Exerciser. No. 0.

Third Prize.

1. A Spalding's "Expert" Punching Bag.

Second Prize.

1. A Spalding's "Expert" Punching Bag.
2. A Set of Championship Boxing Gloves. No. 4.
3. A Whiteley Exerciser. No. 0.

Third Prize.

1. A Spalding's "Expert" Punching Bag.

THIRD CLASS.

Open to Boys 12 and under.

First Prize.

1. A Spalding's "Expert" Punching Bag.
2. A Set of Youth's Championship Boxing Gloves.
3. A Pair of Spring Dumb Bells.
4. A Pair of Indian Clubs.
5. A Whiteley Exerciser. No. 1.
6. A Ribbed Sweater. No. 9.

Second Prize.

1. A Spalding's "Expert" Punching Bag.
2. A Set of Youth's Championship Boxing Gloves.
3. A Whiteley Exerciser. No. 0.

Third Prize.

1. A Spalding's "Expert" Punching Bag.

All these Prizes are Spalding's First-Grade Goods.

WHEN a TIP TOP reader becomes a contestant for these prizes he must measure himself carefully, cut out the coupon which he finds at the end of this column, fill in the blank spaces with answers to all questions, have it signed by the newsdealer or postmaster of his town or city, and mail to TIP TOP WEEKLY, in care of STREET & SMITH, 238 William Street, New York City. At the end of six months he will measure himself again, cut out another coupon from the Physical Culture Department, which must be filled out in the same way and re-

turned to us. The success of his training will be judged by the improvement of his measurements as shown by the first and second coupons.

The competitor having the highest percentage of improvement will receive the first prize. The next highest will be winner of the second prize, and the third best will receive the third prize.

In order that the competition may be in every respect fair, the system of counting used at Yale College will be adopted, and Professor Fourmen will judge the records of all contestants for the prizes.

COUPON

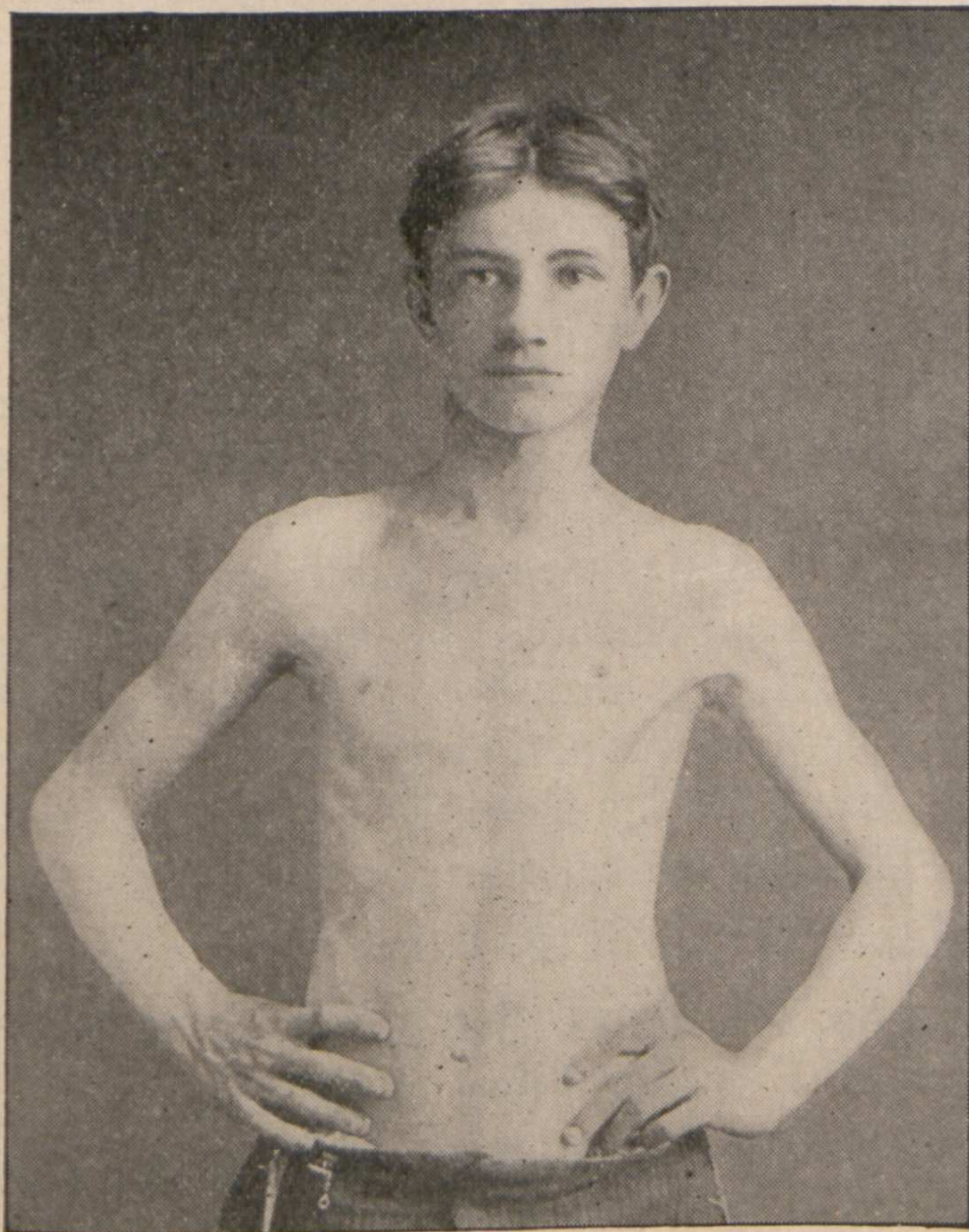
TIP TOP ATHLETIC CONTEST.

Date 1901
 Name
 Residence
 Age Years Months
 Weight Lbs.
 Height Feet Inches
 Girth of Chest Uninflated Inches
 " " Inflated "
 " Waist "

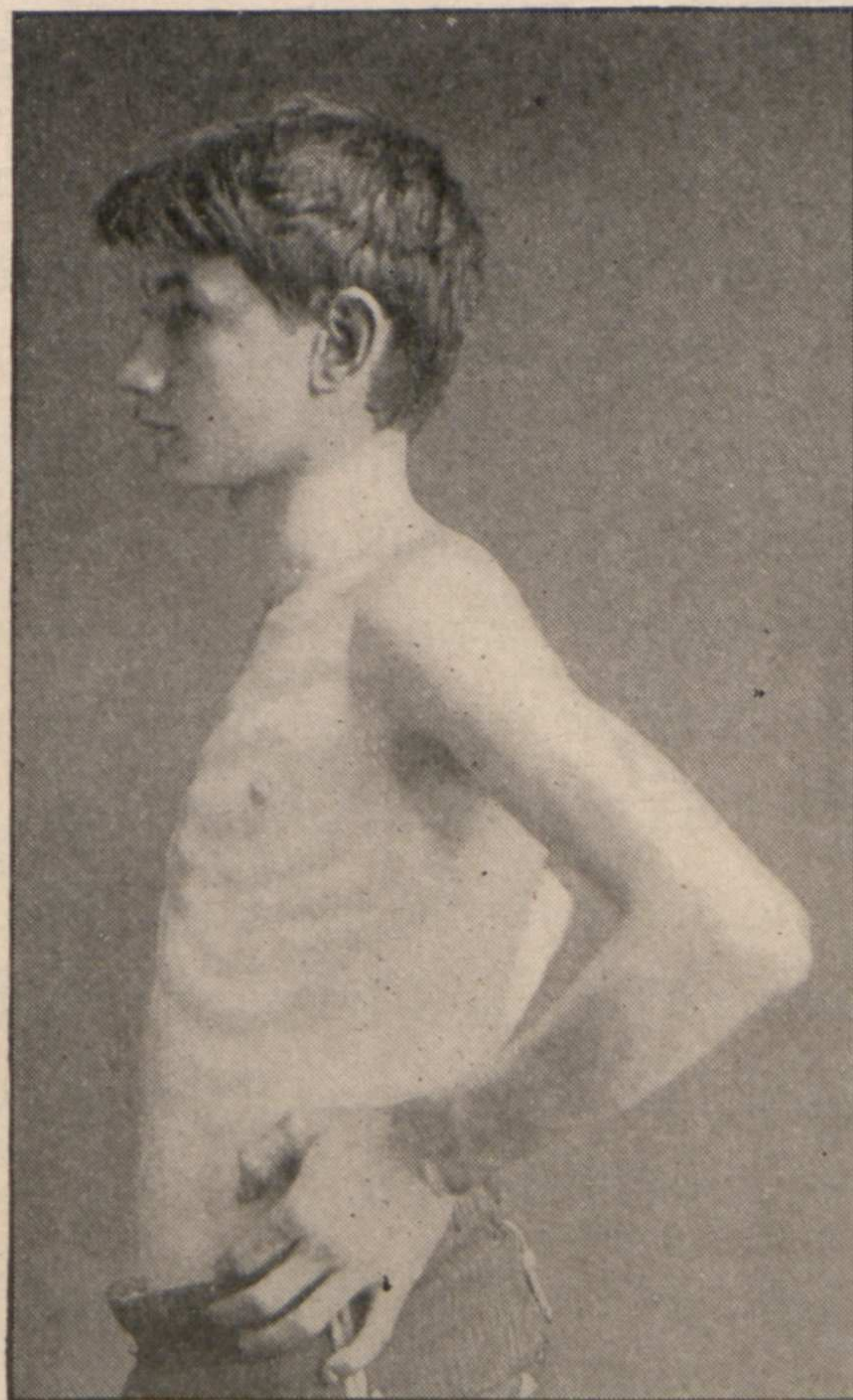
Girth of Right Thigh Inches
 " Left Thigh "
 " Right Calf "
 " Left Calf "
 " Right Arm "
 " Left Arm "
 " Right Forearm "
 " Left Forearm "
 Name of Newsdealer or Postmaster

OUR Tip Top Athletes

WE publish, this week, two photographs of Lewis Walker, of Jamaica, New York. Lewis has always had a great fondness for athletics of all kinds, and even when he was ten years old he had a football team of which he was captain. He has also played baseball, but it was not until he became inter-



ested in the Tip Top Physical Culture Department that he determined to make the best of himself as an athlete. In writing to Prof. Fourmen, he says that he has grown so rapidly that he has not been able to develop his muscle as much as he would like. This, no doubt, is



true, but it is a difficulty which can be easily overcome. To all boys who have "grown too fast," as the saying is, it might be well to remark that physical training will start things along the right line. It will give the muscles a tendency to develop which they would not get without the training. Lewis is going to make a strong try for the prize honors, and we have no doubt at all but that in six months he will have improved wonderfully, and may count upon ranking among the top-notchers.

NOTICE On this page we will reproduce the photographs of Tip Top Readers who have the best physical development. Here is a chance for every boy who aspires to become known as an athlete. Boys, send in your photograph as soon as possible. Send us negatives or toned photographs. Do not send "blue prints" as we cannot use them.

ONE OF THE FINEST.



OF the many weeklies which we have recently introduced to the public, COMRADES has proved itself one of the most popular. Tom Wright, the hero, is a splendid character and a strong favorite with all who say of him that he is *Wright* by name and right by nature, *right* in deed and always *right*.

The many thrilling and exciting adventures of Tom and his friends will be followed with the deepest interest by all who read COMRADES.

Titles of the latest numbers are:

- No. 64—Tom Wright's Pluck; or, Under the Leadership of Bobbie Skylark.
- No. 65—On Guard; or, Phil Stirling's Peril.
- No. 66—Tom Wright's Daring; or, Old Mansur's Unexpected Passenger.
- No. 67—In the Nick of Time; or, Phil Stirling's Fair Rescuer.

For Sale by All Newsdealers. Five Cents a Copy.

STREET & SMITH, PUBLISHERS,
238 WILLIAM STREET, NEW YORK.

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